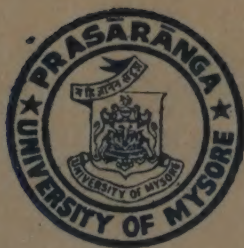


# STUDIES IN VEDANTA

**Prof. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR**

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1988



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**Prof. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR**



1988

‘Studies in Vedanta’ by Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, Published by the Director, Prasaraṅga, University of Mysore, Manasaṅgotri, Mysore-6. First Edition, 1988, Demy Octavo PP. x+viii+272, Price : Rs. 43-00.

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Director, Prasaraṅga, Manasaṅgotri, Mysore-6

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## **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

We are happy to present to the public Prof. S. S. Raghavachar's book "Studies in Vedanta." It is the result of the scholar's intense study conducted for several years. We are grateful to Sri S. S. Raghavachar for kindly permitting us to publish his book.

We are also thankful to the Director, Mysore University Printing Press, Mysore for their neat printing.

**K. T. VEERAPPA**  
*Director*



## PREFACE

I am glad to convey to the University of Mysore my grateful appreciation for publishing my 'Studies in Vedanta'. Many of my separate writings and translations of the classical treatises of Vedanta have received the privilege of publication from the University of Mysore and that of University of Madras and Sri Laxmi Hayagreeva Trust. Many such writings have been brought out by the centres of Sri Ramakrishna Order. While engaged in these strenuous textual studies, it occurred that monographs bearing on the varied phases of Vedanta with particular reference to central philosophical issues were also necessary. It is in pursuit of this objective that these studies have come into being. They naturally fall into five categories. The first group presents the fundamental orientation of Vedanta. The second group deals with Advaita Vedanta in its important and intricate aspects. The third group is devoted to a philosophical portraiture of Ramanuja's system of thought. This is followed by a similar treatment of the philosophy of Madhva. In all these studies care is taken to keep close to the related classics, the purely philosophical problems and also to the life-oriented teachings of the related system of thought. Though exhaustive exposition is not attempted, basic questions are sought to be met with objectivity. This presentation of the various classical schools of Vedanta is legitimately followed by a brief characterization of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's contribution. The final Chapters are devoutly dedicated to the personalities and teachings of Bhagavan Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The author records his profound veneration to the memories of Prof. A. R. Wadia, Prof. N. A. Nikam, Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and Prof. M. A. Venkata Rao. He remembers with awe and thankfulness that he could sit at the feet of Pandit Ratnam Laxmipuram Srinivasachar. His intellectual and personal indebtedness to the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order is truly beyond words. He remembers with

profound piety the kindness he has received at the hands of Prof. Hiriyanra and Prof. V. Subramanya Iyer. He regrets the inadequacy of his accomplishment in spite of the magnificence of this blessed heritage.

He is deeply obliged to the Director of the Prasaraṅga, University of Mysore and the functionaries of the University Press for their excellent work and superb courtesies.

S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### I

Page No.

1. The Indian Mind in the Library of Western Philosophy	1
2. The Message of the Upanishads	13
3. The Perennial Freshness of the Upanishads	23
4. The Phenomenology of the Indian Philosophical Systems	35
5. The Common Fundamentals of the Great Religions	42

### II

1. Spiritual Freedom (The View of Advaita Vedanta)	50
2. Sri Shankara and World-Thought	63
3. Sri Shankara and the Brahma-Sutra	70
4. 'Neti, Neti'	84
5. 'Sarvam Khal Vidam Brahma'	91
6. Shankara on Buddhistic Metaphysics	94
7. The Place of Bhakti in Sri Sankara's Gita-Bhasya	110
8. The Place of Reason in Advaita	117

### III

1. The Cardinal Principle of the Visistadvaita of Ramanuja	145
2. The Gita according to Ramanuja	150
3. Sadhana in Visistadvaita	175
4. Ramanuja on Truth and Error	187
5. The Heritage of Sri Vedanta Desika	196

### IV

1. Sri Madhva's System of Vedanta	202
2. Madhva's Theory of Sādhana	210
3. The Concept of Consciousness from the Dvaita Standpoint	224
4. Sri Madhva on Ānandamayādhikarna	236

## V

1. Radhakrishnan, A Philosopher with a Difference	243
2. The Four-fold Significance of Sri Ramakrishna	251
3. The Divine Preceptor	256
4. Categorizing Swami Vivekānanda	264

# *The Indian Mind in the Library of Western Philosophy*

## I

Plato greets the Indian mind at the very threshold of Western thought with an astounding degree of Vedanta. For him the world of sense-experience is a shadowy affair and his eternal world of ideas hierarchically culminating in the 'Idea of the Good' approximates to the Upanishadic thought. The highest reality is 'Sat' meaning both the highest being and the highest perfection and the temporal sensory world of *Nama-rupa* is a distorted presentation to the Upanishads. Both are grand visions and their affinity is unmistakable. That Plato leaves his concept of the Good somewhat obscure is understandable and even the Upanishads recognize the unspeakable transcendence of Brahman.

The Indian student rejoices in the platonic doctrine of the transmigration of soul and the tripartite psychology of the human personality. The moral ordering of the soul and the ethical class-system of society pictured in the Republic reinforce the faith in the conceptions of the *sthitaprajna* and *svadharma* advocated in the *Gita*. Plato is the most Indian of European philosophers.

Aristotle is considerably less so. His classification of categories has immense interest in comparison to the list in the Vaiśeṣika System. His analysis of causation recalls the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika wisdom on the problem. His account of reasoning is very close to Nyāya theory of inference with a difference that puts the Nyāya position in a more favourable light. The Nyāya inference is happily inclusive of induction and the Baconian denunciation of syllogism would have been pointless against Nyāya.

Aristotle's Poetics deals with the depiction of the tragic emotion in Drama and the Indian theory of Rasa, particularly

the treatment of Karuṇa hits off the right solution, in an identical manner. Aristotle did not have a theory of the three Guṇas at his disposal and the Indian aestheticians put the theory to effective use. To transmute a *bhava* into a *satvic* mould is to turn it into a *Rasa* and that transmutation effects the catharsis that Aristotle endeavoured to discern in tragedy.

Plotinus is the last great figure in Greek thought. His mysticism, his adoration of the 'One', his account of the descent of the 'One' into manifold earthly existence and of the heroic spiritual return of the many to the 'One' in ascetic contemplativeness, are literal anticipations of Advaita Mysticism. It is singularly striking that the father of European Mysticism should be so akin to later Vedānta. No wonder Indian students of Western philosophy study and accept Plotinus with understanding and pleasant surprise.

## II

The task of reconciling revelation and reason was the major labour for the Medieval Theologian of the West. The masterly handling of the problem by St. Aquinas excites the admiration of the Indian. He too faces the problem in the *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta* and the high valuation on the part of St. Aquinas of scripture that is bereft of rational corroboration cheers the Vedāntin to whom genuine *śruti* must be *aprapta*.

The proofs for the existence of God formulated by St. Aquinas are of great interest to Nyāya philosophers, for they too labour in that direction. They economise the proofs and on the whole are content with the cosmological and teleological proofs. The proof based on gradation of value is strangely reminiscent of a similar one in Patañjali's *Yoga-Sutra*.

The saintly and mystical tradition of Christianity affects the Indian mind deeply. The German mystic, Meister Eckhart is particularly close to Advaita Vedānta and has called forth special study. The *Imitation of Christ* is a masterpiece of Christian *Bhakti* and it was a favourite of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. *The Practice of the presence of God* by Brother Lawrence is significant as it confirms the *Bhakti* of the

*Gita*. The brother boldly declares that he found God nearer to him when he was outwardly employed in devout work than when he was practising mere inward devotion. No wonder the brief treatise has called forth admiration out of proportion to its slender volume. In general the Indian mind moves in a very congenial and spiritually strengthening atmosphere when it occupies itself with the greater mystics of Christianity.

### III

The very beginning of modern Western Philosophy startles us with its Vedāntic dictum of *cogito, ergo sum*. Śaṅkara repeatedly argues that the self or Ātman cannot be negated, because even the negation is an exercise of the Ātman's consciousness. The indubitable certainty on which Descartes seeks to build up his metaphysics is a cardinal affirmation of Vedānta. The Indian accords his approval to the initial proposition of Cartesianism. He is out of sympathy with the recent attacks on Cartesianism by writers such as Gilbert Ryle. It looks as if the contemporary Western thought is relinquishing the great European philosophers and the Indian philosophical outlook, undaunted by that metaphysical harakiri, will continue to cherish and propagate their teachings. Even as the renaissance gathered its Aristotle and Plato from the Arab writers, a future Renaissance of Western philosophy will have perhaps to recover its platos and spinozas from Indian philosophy.

Spinoza exercises a double attraction. His idea of God as the single infinite substance with mind and matter as two of his attributes has verbal affinities with *Viśiṣṭadvaita*. His conception of the human ideal of life as 'Intellectual love of God' corresponds to Ramānuja's *bhakti-rapāpnnam jnanam*. But in his fundamental thinking Spinoza is an Advaitin. For him all 'determination is negation' and this is precisely the logical principle underlying the Advaitic exaltation of the *Nirguṇa* and *Nirviśeṣa* conception of *Brahman*. The phenomenal character of the individual as something that is set up by 'Imagination' and as dissolving under the glare of philosophical reason offers a mighty reinforcement to the Advaitic point of view. The

Advaitin would only wish that Spinoza had not attributed even materiality or 'Extension' to God and had justly banished it into the realm of *Māyā*. If Spinoza, the Indian thinker would feel, were trimmed a little in his secondary principles, he would be a pure and unambiguous Advaitin. The Ethical thought of Spinoza seeking human freedom and perfection in the knowledge of God is a magnificent corroboration of the Vedantic concept of *Mokṣa*. The charm of the saintly life of Spinoza and his 'God-intoxication' are factors that endear him deeply to the Indian mind.

Leibnitz is the father of all panpsychism in Western thought as he described matter as only mind in a low grade of development. The *Sākta* School of Advaita sees in matter only *Cit-Sakti* concealed and Śaṅkara alludes to the view that regarded material existence as '*Supta-caitanya*'. This way of liquidating matter solves many a metaphysical problems. Leibnitz dismissed the expedient of looking upon plurality as merely phenomenal and sought to trace it to its noumenal roots. The 'Identity of Indiscernibles' brings out the principle of the irreplaceable and indissoluble uniqueness of the Mondas. In this Leibnitz approaches close to the Dvaita affirmation of *Bheda* as a fundamental verity. In his theory of knowledge Leibnitz propounds the two fundamental laws, law of identity and the law of sufficient reason. He believes that these two laws govern the entire realm of human knowledge. We see an unexpected correspondence to this position in the epistemology of Dharmakīrti who formulated just these two principles as governing all reasoning, *Tadutpatti Tatsvabhāva*.

In the Empiricist tradition of European philosophy, there are many traits and tenets that interest the Indian student deeply. Locke's difficulty about 'substance' apart from "qualities" reminds us of the Buddhist denial of *pudgala-vāda*. His empirical standpoint looks plausible, even though recent empiricism or positivism may appear a grotesque *reductio-ad-absurdum*. Berkeley's arguments against the reality of matter strike a fundamental note and his position is surprisingly close to the *Vijnānā-vāda* of Buddhism. His later and feebler theological superstruc-

ture finds no parallel in *Vijnāna-vāda*. All that is best in Berkeley is his initial idealism and that idealism is there in all its unflinching rigour in Buddhistic idealism.

Hume, a solitary solidier in the Western world, who destroys more than he accomplishes, comes to the Indian philosopher with great claims to kinship. His analysis of the self lands him squarely in the schools of early Buddhism. His critique of causation takes him very near Nāgārjuna and Gauḍapāda. The metaphysical result of the critique is different in the two traditions. It signifies for Hume that there is no necessitating continuity in the so-called casual process, while for Nāgārjuna and Gauḍapāda it signifies the unreality of the temporal process, thereby rendering the monism of the Absolute, *Śūnya* or *Brahman*, absolute and unqualified.

Kant is undoubtedly the central figure in modern European philosophy. Even his adversaries pay him the compliment of coming back to him again and again for refutation. Kant, to the Indian mind, appears particularly congenial. His relegation of the world of empirical thought with its space and time and all the categories of understanding to the realm of phenomena and his admission of ultimate reality as unknowable makes him a great ally of Advaita Vedanta. No wonder that Deussen who drank deeply at the Kantian fountain became the best and the most ardent interpreter of Vedanta to the modern world.

Kant's categorical imperative bears resemblance to the Prābhakara conception of *Dharma* and to the more fundamental ethics of the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* does not remain in the closed compartment of Ethics but fits its ethical doctrine within a wider scheme of God-realization. But its radical anti-hedonism and valuation of duty for the sake of duty do prominently bring out the affinities to Kantian ethics. The Kantian ethics is not abandoned but is integrally assimilated to a fuller and profounder religious consciousness. Kant, it would appear, was groping towards the religious spirit but never fully entered into it. The rapture and illumination that permeate the *Gītā* were not his. Hegel hailed Kantian Aesthetics as the first 'sensible word' in the field. It is a delight to the Indian philosopher to

watch Kant labouring at the foundations of Aesthetics. The resultant characterization of aesthetic experience in his masterly strokes confirm and strengthen the doctrines of Indian aesthetics. That the experience of beauty or sublimity is a unique experience, not bound by hedonistic, utilitarian, moralistic and intellectualistic conditions but constitutes an intrinsic joy, in which the phenomena and noumena somehow meet is a glorious truth for the Indian mind. Sense is transfigured into a revelation in aesthetic experience. One has only to note the epithets that Indian aestheticians use in this connection, such as *Alaukika*, *Svayamprayojana*, *Sādhāraṇīkṛta*, *Paranirvṛti*, *Tanmaya*, *Vyañjana*, *Brahmāsvda-sahodara* to appreciate fully how identical is the Kantian analysis. This part of Kantian philosophy is fittingly called the 'crowning phase of the critical philosophy.' This was the heritage that Kant bequeathed to Goethe, Schelling, Schiller and Coleridge to embellish and substantiate. Nourished by Bharata, Ānandvardhana and Abhinava Gupta, the Indian aesthetician follows the aesthetic speculation of the West with easy comprehension and keen interest. He recognises the echoes and enjoys the pleasure of re-assurance.

It may be remarked in passing that Lokamanya Tilak recognised Kant and T. H. Green as the closest approximations to the philosophy of the *Gītā*.

It looks as if Hegel came to India in his Anglo-Saxon garb and won immediate acceptance. Swami Vivekananda was averse to Hegel but Sir S. Radhakrishnan educated in Bradley and Bosanquet viewed reality through Hegelian spectacles. This synchronized with the zenith of Hegelianism in British thought.

In these days of anti-Hegelianism a somewhat cooler appraisal of the focal points of interest in Hegelian thought to the Indian student may be enumerated. Hegel represents a spirit-centered Monism, *Ātmādvaita*, and thus gets lodgement in the citadel of Vedanta. But his doctrine of the concrete universal, signifying the fusion of the Absolute and its appearances places him in the ambiguous zone of *Bhedābheda*. His dialectic as such is not taken in any meticulous piety but the moral of it, as the finite calling for dialectical evolution to the absolute idea in an

inevitable process of logic, is a welcome ratification of Vedantic absolutism. His conservative ethics is somewhat analogous to the conventional version of *Swadharma*. His philosophy of history is too facile and repulsive. But its opening definition of the goal of history as the development of freedom is too exalting to be ignored. His philosophy of religion, derogatory of non-Christian Religions, is rarely studied. His aesthetics worthily distilled in Bosanquet's exposition is admired. Hegel in himself is admired in parts but is studied in detail and with zeal in his Bradleyan re-incarnation.

Bradley's polemical annihilation of what he stigmatizes as appearances, powerfully recalls Nāgārjuna, Sriharṣa and Citsuka. His characterization of the Absolute as a coherent and comprehensive whole constituted of sentience, (a strange fusion of Spinoza and Berkley, as it were) neatly hits off the '*Tat tvam asi*' formula, combining infinity with immediacy. The merger or absorption of the individual self in the Absolute spirit is pure *Advaita*. The denunciation of personality and the God of religion, re-enacts the old battle between *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* conceptions of *Brahman*.

The admission of the radical inadequacy of thought to characterize the absolute rightly and the positing of a higher immediacy of experience which is more than thought but inclusive of thought, feeling and will in a state of transmutation is a welcome confirmation of Vedantic intuition. With so high a proportion of *Advaita*, that Bradley should have admitted the reality of appearances in the Absolute and accorded to them an 'adjectival' status therein, is an unexpected accommodation to the trenchant ambiguity of Hegelianism. To the honest *Advaitin*, this appears a descent rather than otherwise. But to the general student of Vedanta this philosophy constitutes a fine variety of *Bhedābheda* of which the illustrious Indian exponents are Bhartṛprapañca, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa. Even Tantra, Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan represent this *Māyā-vāda* in moderation. Great are the arguments of Bradley and they are absorbingly interesting to the Indian mind.

## IV

Passing on to later Western thought, we notice an increase of points of importance. Lotze's defence of the ultimacy of the category of personality, Pringle-Pattison's battle on behalf of the irreducible reality of the individual self, G. F. Stout's vindication of thought are of paramount interest to the personalistic and theistic Vedantins of the systems of Rāmānuja and Madhva. The works of Brightman and even Whitehead are taken advantage of in the effort to counter Absolutism, which, in the changed times, seems to have lost the power to crush but only administers irritation. Schopenhauer rehabilitated the ethics of Buddhism and Vedanta on the basis of a voluntaristic Idealism. His artistically worked out system supports the pessimistic and ascetic currents in Indian thought. Its appeal is enhanced by his open admiration of the consoling and elevating power of the Upanishads and by the great services of his pupil, Deussen, to the cause of the Upanishads and Śaṅkara.

Coming down to later times, we encounter bewildering complexity in Western thought. Neitzche seems to have broadened the ideas behind the two contrasted types of Indian dance, *Lāsya* and *Tāṇḍava*, and propounded his theory of the Appollo-nian and Dionysian elements in culture. His idea of 'eternal recurrence' is itself a recurrence of the old Indian idea of *Kalpas*. His theory of super-man is sublimated in the hands of Sri Aurobindo. His glorification of power seems to find a spiritualized restatement in Swami Vivekananda's praise of strength.

Realism in many forms asserted itself in the course of the present century both in America and England. The first conspicuous blow was delivered by G.E. Moore in 1903 in his *Refutation of Idealism*. Though it was a direct attack on Berkeleyan Idealism, its inclusion of a criticism of 'Internal Relations' did furnish a challenge to Absolute Idealism also. It is interesting to note that many of the arguments of Moore against subjective idealism correspond to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Dvaita refutations of subjectivism. What is of greater interest is that it contains arguments precisely the same as those of

Saṅkara against Vijñāna-vāda in his *Sūtra-Bhāṣya*. The critical movement was elaborated further by a host of realistic writers, notably, S. Alexander, Bertrand Russell in England and Perry and Holt in America. This entire idealism-versus-realism dialectics is of great interest to the Indian student. Even the Idealists developed, in consequence, a realistic version of idealism. Bosanquet almost hailed Moore as a liberator from the sickly extremes of idealism. Whitehead imported to the context his outstanding equipment in physics and mathematics and the claims of idealism in epistemology, in particular, received a serious setback. American realism broke up into two camps, new and critical, and thereby entered a new age in Realism. The issue that brought about this spirit is the one that broke up the early Buddhist epistemology into the Vai-bhāṣika and Sautrāntika Schools. The Vaibhāṣikas, like the New Realists, posited direct perception of physical objects entailing endless difficulty in dealing with the problem of error. The 'critical realists' like the Sautrāntikas, uphold the distinction between the sensed object and the actual physical object and thereby solved the problems of relativity of perception and error. But the need for a right construction of the relation between the perceptual object and the physical object is a fountain of endless problems and no wonder G.E. Moore himself acknowledges his perplexity. It is this question that led to Berkeley in the past. Realism started with a confident concentration on perception for vindicating its stand and it appears that it may finally break down on the problem of perception. The entire story of recent realism is full of moral for the Indian philosopher. Bertrand Russell's contribution to the philosophy of mathematics is immense but it hardly enters into the proper field of philosophy. In that field he succumbs to the conventional reductionism of Hume with occasional flashes of more upto-date insights. Polemics against what he describes as the subject-predicate logic of the past is something with which the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophies have to reckon. Whitehead, on the other hand, offers a difficult metaphysical system, incorporating his interpretation of recent physics and the fundamental insights

of Plato and tending towards what may be described as an Organic and Creative Theism.

The philosophy of Bergson is akin to the dominant Indian outlook in so far as it repudiates materialism and the supremacy of the mere intellect. His concepts of life and intuition require a little modification to be put into Vedantic use. His exaltation of time and his specific interpretation of the nature of real time have become parts of current wisdom. The spiritual unfoldment of Bergsonianism in his account of static and dynamic morality and that of institutional and Mystical Religion are of profound import to the philosophy of Religion. His magnificent description of mystical religion and his activistic interpretation of it bring his final standpoint very close to the activistic Bhakti of the *Gītā*. Somehow the philosophical discoveries of Bergson are gifted with stamina for self-preservation inspite of his being a lone fighter of his causes. Bergson is one of the philosophers who come to stay, as it were. The three philosophers of Evolution, Alexander, Lyod Murgan and General Smuts pave the way, as it were, for the advent of Sri Aurobindo. For a full advocacy of Aurobindo, an intimate study and evaluation of these evolutionary philosophers is called for and Aurobindoites like Dr. Jayadev Singh have fully mastered the philosophical situation. Evolution in an anti-naturalistic direction is the Indian gift to world-thought.

There is an abiding pragmatic element in Indian philosophy. Something like an idealistic pragmatism is there in the Upanishads and the *Gītā*. The early Buddhistic definition of reality from which is derived the Kinetic view of existence is definitely pragmatic. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika criterion of truth is pragmatic correspondence. The Prābhākara school of Purva-mīmāṃsā and the Vedanta of Rāmānuja frankly utilize the pragmatic criterion of truth. In this background it is not difficult for the Indian mind to appreciate the pragmatism of William James. It is also particularly drawn to the philosopher by his glowing delineation of religious experience in his bewitching Gifford Lectures. But it may shrink from the naturalistic version of Dewey. It may also dissociate itself from the extremes of plura-

lism, empiricism and temporalism in current pragmatism. It is of interest to the Indian philosopher to disentangle these seemingly extraneous elements from pragmatism and to relinquish the coarse subordination of truth to utility as found in the vulgar presentations of pragmatism. Prof. Hirianna sharply distinguishes the pragmatism of Rāmānuja from popular pragmatism. He says 'Rāmānuja, unlike the pragmatist, is interested in truth for its own sake and values knowledge more for the light it brings than for the fruits it bears'.<sup>1</sup> Pragmatism needs examination for the Indian philosopher for separating its wholesome core from the unhealthy encrustations.

## V

Recent philosophy in the West abounds in Existentialism and Logical positivism. The founder of Existentialism, Kirkegaard, has the Indian temperament. He rightly prefers live existence to dead speculative essentialism. In the interpretation of the hierarchy of life-values his chart of progress from the æsthetic to the ethical and from the ethical to the religious bears affinity to the Indian modes of thought. Something analogous to this plan is adumbrated in Prof. Hirianna's lectures on the 'Quest after Perfection'. But later Existentialists defy clear analysis and classification for easy assimilation and quick assessment to take place. But the general gospel of commitment, subjectivity and the diagnosis of the human situation as one of anguish have a Buddhist flavour. Existentialism is naturalistic, absolutistic and theistic by turns in the hands of its diverse votaries. The one common point seems to be the emphasis on life rather than on thought and that goes well with the orientation of Indian philosophy. A deeper probing into the foundations is certainly a desideratum. Hence a need for a fuller understanding of the movement. The logical positivist movement which seeks to eliminate Metaphysics and Religion is at the farthest remove from Indian thought. Its insistence on sense experience is good and no school of Indian philosophy did away altogether with the evidence of that source of knowledge. But to repudiate speculative philosophy entirely and to reject

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<sup>1</sup>*Outlines*, 396.

revelation and mystic experience is to surrender a larger truth for the sake of the minimum of its kind. Indian philosophy knows of the Carvaka system of philosophy and has dismissed it all through its development. Its principle of rejection is that in the very process of the establishment of the veracity of sensory experience, when that is called in question, non-sensory modes of procedure are to be employed. Verification without the adoption of ratiocination in the process is, to say the least, an impossibility. Admirers of Indian philosophy should face the situation in a thoroughgoing and tough way. They must make a deep study of this new variety of empiricism and examine its credentials in the interest of their entire speculative and devotional heritage. They must explore that heritage and unearth methods of meeting this counter-revolution, if there are any. Western metaphysics and religion are slowly recovering from this shock and are steadily building up their might. Will not Indian thought with a more hoary past and more profound varieties of insight rise to the occasion and vindicate its claims? Will not the Upanisads and Saṅkara, Kumārila and Udayana, Rāmānuja and Jayatīrtha help us out of the peril?

In the field of social philosophy everything of value in recent Indian life and thought centres round the personality of Mahatma Gandhi. He drew his inspiration from Ruskin and Tolstoy. The sarvodaya ideal and the technique of *Satyāgraha* are the Gandhian translations of the Ruskin-cum-Tolstoyan idealism. Hence these masters deserve deep study. Even Thoreau's *Walden* which said "How much more admirable the *Bhagavad Gītā* than all the ruins of the East?", has a bearing on Gandhism.<sup>1</sup> Sorokin, the great social philosopher, dedicated his '*Reconstruction of Humanity*' to 'the deathless Mohan Das K. Gandhi'. He sees in Gandhian creative altruism the only Gospel that can save mankind. These are massive and powerful social philosophers that appeal to the Indian mind.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to read T. S. Eliot daring to put the *Bhagavad Gita* next to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. "The *Bhagavad-Gita* which is the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within my experience..." (*Essay on Dante*, page 258).

## *The Message of the Upanishads*

It has become conventional to contrast the impulse originating Indian philosophy with that which brought into existence Greek and through it Western philosophical thought. It is said that wonder or curiosity is the basis of European philosophy, while in India philosophic inquiry was initiated by the pragmatic necessity of eradicating the evils of life. The contrast implies that knowledge for its own sake is not valued in Indian thought and that truth enjoys only an instrumental value, since salvation and not understanding, it is said, is the goal of philosophy. Since the implication is of a serious nature, it is worthwhile going into the question of the accuracy of this conventionally drawn contrast.

There are two pertinent considerations: Firstly, it is to be noted that in all the schools of Indian thought that preach the ideal of salvation, the ideal is construed as attainable only through enlightenment. While knowledge is made an instrumental value, it is advocated as the one means for attaining perfection. The origin of all the evils of life is said to be ignorance. Thus good and evil are interpreted as truth and error. The seeming subordination of knowledge is virtually cancelled by the exaltation of knowledge as the pathway to perfection. Thus philosophical insight is not a child of wonder but an absolute necessity for the higher life. To hold that knowledge is its own justification is undoubtedly to place it high in the scale of values; but to advocate it as the only means of ideal life is to accord to it the highest value.

Surely the vision of reality is valued in some such spirit by the greatest of Western metaphysicians like Plato and Spinoza. For Indian philosophy vision is the final means of spiritual liberation and is constitutive of that liberation itself, for ultimately the end and means are identical and convertible. The concept of *jivan-mukti*, of eternal life here and now, signifies the

fact that the vision of truth is constitutive of the state of the soul's release. The finality of knowledge in the ladder of spiritual discipline, and the identity of means and end in the realm of the spirit, establish once for all that knowledge is no mere subordinate value for Indian thought.

Secondly, we must analyse the notion of wonder or curiosity that is supposed to have generated European speculation. It is desire for knowledge and an urge to transcend the limitations of understanding. *It is the nisus towards expansion of life* in the realm of knowledge. Surely the Indian ideal of *moksha* signifies freedom from limitations and fullness of life; thus the intellectual quest for knowledge, named wonder, is in itself an aspect of the urge for completion of being, which completion is named *moksha* in Indian philosophy. If philosophy in the West originates from the desire to know, it does not differ in principle and essence from Indian philosophy in respect of its origin, for Indian philosophy takes its rise from the urge to infinitude of life, and love of knowledge is but an aspect and a constituent part of that urge. The Indian attitude has the merit of interpreting the impulse to philosophy in a larger and deeper and therefore a more fundamental spirit. It has been already indicated that the major philosophers of the West have almost an Indian outlook on the nature and value of knowledge; and it looks as if this time-honoured contrast between Indian and Western philosophies in respect of their origin is somewhat superficial and is unsustainable in the long run.

The Upanishads are justly regarded as the principal philosophical documents in Indian philosophy. The Vedic hymns do contain elements of philosophy, but they are faint intimations rather than emphatic assertions. They constitute just a background and undercurrent of the Vedic religion: they are comparatively scattered and disproportionately insufficient in quantity. In the Upanishads, however, the early philosophical tendency is brought to fulness and maturity of expression. In addition, philosophical reflection forms the central theme in them. Knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate Reality, is the

sole burden of the greatest of the Upanishads. Thus they constitute the fulfilment and final formulation of the Vedic thought. All subsequent speculation of almost every school of thought is built on the foundations laid by the Upanishads. Even the heretical schools are indebted to them. The materialist school of Charvaka owes its analysis of nature to the Upanishads. Its materialism is but a revival of what is stated and set aside in the Upanishads. The Buddhist philosophy bases itself on the law of karma and transmigration, which is part of the Upanishadic heritage. The distinction between the self and the non-self so fundamental to Jainism is part of the much wider and ultimately monistic conception of the Upanishads. All the brahminical schools explicitly acknowledge the authority of the Upanishads. The Vedantic schools make it their sole aim to champion and elaborate their teachings. The Purva-Mimamsa is an apparent exception, but its postulate of the *atman*, of karma and the ideal of *moksha* are all derived from principles adumbrated in the Upanishads. Thus we see that the Upanishads enshrine the core of Indian's philosophical heritage.

The most ancient and authoritative Upanishads are the *Chhandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka*, *Isa*, *Katha*, *Kena*, *Aitereya*, *Taittiriya*, *Prasna*, *Mundaka*, *Svetasvatara*, *Mandukya* and *Kaushitaki*. Their antiquity and worth are proved by their style, the weighty character of their themes, and the value attached to them by the systematizers of Vedanta like Badarayana, Gaudapada, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa. Each one of these principal Upanishads sets forth a comprehensive world-view though in details they supplement one another. In what follows it is proposed to outline the basic ideas of the *Taittiriya*.

The philosophical part of the *Taittiriya* opens with the aphoristic declaration "one who *knows Brahman* attains the *highest end* of life." The statement enunciates the three fundamentals of philosophy, namely Brahman, knowledge, and the highest end. The function of philosophy according to the Upanishads consists of the formulation of three things, viz., the nature of Reality, the ideal mode of life and the supreme goal

of existence. This conception of the scope of philosophy corresponds essentially to Kant's formulation of the basic questions of philosophy: What can I know? What ought I to do? and What can I hope for? The Upanishad in question affirms 'Brahman' to be the Reality, 'knowledge of Brahman' to be the duty of man and 'the attainment of the highest' to be the goal of life. The entire Upanishad is an unfoldment and elaboration of this threefold theme. Let us note how these three aspects are developed therein.

#### BRAHMAN

The word 'Brahman' may be tentatively understood as standing for the ultimate principle and the infinite Real. It corresponds to what is ordinarily denoted by the words 'God' and 'Absolute.' The concept at once commits the thought of the Upanishad to monism, and that a spiritual or idealistic monism. The word quantitatively connotes infinity and qualitatively connotes perfection. It, in short, signifies the perfect and all-embracing spirit. The Upanishad offers a definition of this principle. It says that "Brahman is real, conscious and infinite." What is the meaning and proof of the 'reality' of Brahman? It means that it is not a subjective 'idea' but an objective principle. It is not a postulate but an entity. The Upanishads *Chhandogya*, *Brihadaranyaka* and *Mundaka* supplement the *Taittiriya* in this connection. In all these it is asserted that to know the manifold of existence, we must apprehend the 'One.' The world constitutes an ordered and systematic whole; the system and order in it would be impossible if it were not the manifestation and expression of a single unitary principle. It is the apprehension of this absolute ground that involves and leads to the correct understanding of the cosmos. The world of apparent plurality is grounded in a single principle, whose reality is the basis of whatever reality we cognize in the world of change and multiplicity. This unconditional and absolute Reality is Brahman. This ground of the universe, which is the unconditional Real and the source of all lesser realities, is declared to be of the nature of Consciousness.

It seems to have been taken for granted that the final basis of the universe must be a spiritual principle. Probably the reason for that belief is that the first principle, which should account for all and be the self-sufficient and self-moved cause of the cosmic process, should be an absolute will. It is also partly due to the impossibility of deriving consciousness from anything intrinsically unconscious. A principle that is both one in itself and also the source of endless diversity of presentation, unchanging in itself and yet the ground of all change, cannot be other than Self. Fundamentally the unity of the cosmic ground implies that it is a self-affirming existence. What is not self-affirming, entails the dualism of subject and object when it enters the cognitive situation. The primeval unity of the absolute principle excludes all such dualism and hence it must be a self-affirming ultimate. A non-spiritual entity that does not enter the context of knowing as an object, becomes an unknown thing in itself, and thereby cancels all grounds for its affirmation.

There are only two alternatives finally. Either the first principle must be an unknown and unknowable something the assertion of whose existence is a logical impossibility, or it must be a spiritual Absolute, a supreme Self, essentially of the nature of self-consciousness. There is thus no scope for a monistic materialism or naturalism. The unity of the cosmic ground implies logically its spiritual nature. In the history of philosophy in both the East and the West, the concept of an absolute 'Substance' has inescapably moved to the concept of an absolute 'Subject'. This ultimate spiritual Reality is further declared to be 'infinite'. The implication of this epithet is fourfold: in the first place it is beyond the limitations of time; in the second place it is beyond the limitations of space; in the third place it is absolute, all-inclusive, and encounters nothing alien and nothing restricting the scope of its being; lastly it has no internal division into 'is' and 'ought to be' and is an eternally self-fulfilled perfection. It is this character that lifts Brahman above the normal empirical self and renders the idealism of the Upanishads *absolute and objective* rather than *empirical and subjective* like that of the Buddhist Vijñānavāda.

Why is Brahman declared to be infinite? Limitation is a part of cosmic actuality, and therefore the principle that is basal to and comprehends that actuality naturally transcends its limitation. Discontinuity, division, restriction and imperfection are all forms of negating unity. If Brahman is one in the sense in which the fundamental principle of the universe must be one, not 'one' of the many but 'one' above and in and through the many, it naturally follows that it must be timeless, spaceless, all-inclusive and perfect. Thus the fourfold infinity of Brahman is a necessary implication of its unity. Finitude is a necessary aspect of the items of a pluralistic world: as Brahman dissolves the apparent pluralism of the world it should in itself be above finitude. Thus Brahman is truly to be defined as 'a real infinite consciousness'.

#### KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

Knowledge of Brahman is stated to be the means of attaining the highest state of life. It is one of the axioms of Hindu thought that the quality of knowledge attainable by an individual is determined by the quality of life. "Knowledge is a function of being". A pure mind apprehends Reality and purity of mind is a product of moral self-culture. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* it is clearly stated that one should desire to know the Atman through sacrifice, charity and austerity. In other words one's performance of the duties pertaining to one's station in life is the first requisite for a life devoted to knowledge. The practice of the three cardinal virtues of *daya* *dana* and *dama* (mercy, charity and self-control) is a basic condition of higher life. It is also insisted that the life of moral activity must be combined with desirelessness. *Virtue is self-exertion for ends other than external self-interest*. Moral goodness is truly practised when it is practised for its own sake. It is this aspect of the Upanishadic teaching that is developed into a magnificent doctrine in the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Three stages of knowing are enumerated in the Upanishads, and they are *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*. The first represents the study of the scriptures and learning under spiritual

preceptors. One who does not know the Vedas and does not have a teacher is said to be incapable of comprehending the truth. Assimilation of the spiritual wisdom gathered and transmitted by the saints and sages must surely be the first step. This is learning through *hearing*. To shun the spiritual wisdom of the past without reason is to practise irrationality and as such to disqualify oneself in the search for truth. But it is one of the glories of the Upanishadic teaching that it does not see the finality of knowledge in this acceptance of tradition : rather it inculcates reflection or *manana*, and *tapas* or personal endeavour at enlightenment. The scriptures and sages *initiate* the process of knowing; they do not *finalize* it. The seeker must work on the basis of the received body of knowledge, to build up for himself a rational structure of conviction. While faith is necessary, it does not obliterate critical inquiry. It actually enjoins it. It is this aspect of knowing through dialectical examination that is embodied in the great *Sutras* of Badarayana. When rational reflection engenders personal conviction, making spiritual truths one's own, knowing has completed the second stage.

The third stage is *nididhyasana*, which signifies the continuous affirmation of that knowledge. It consists of abiding in the light ceaselessly. Knowledge of Brahman in this stage passes from the state of transitory cognition to that of life in the presence of the Divine. It is no passing acceptance of a truth but an unbroken life in the daylight of the awareness of truth. This life in Brahman is to be sustained by effort, will and vigilance, until conviction is transformed into perception, until that stage of realization is reached after which suspension of effort does not cause relapse into the experience of the world dissociated from Brahman. This dwelling in Brahman is called *nididhyasana*. It is a deliberate and ever growing contemplation and it ought to be pursued till the point is attained after which all perception is perception of the Absolute and contemplation is unnecessary for holding the Absolute in the soul's vision. This stage of meditation fills the interval between rational conviction and immediate vision or *darsana*.

Completeness of knowledge is reached in the final direct vision of the Absolute. If, after the attainment of rational conviction, the knowing is still mediate and inferential, it is to be construed that there is still some element of ignorance, some obstacle, not yet removed. Meditation that fills the interval between philosophical understanding and immediate vision, removes the remaining element of ignorance. The *bhakti* school of interpretation suggests that the residual obstacle consists of lack of longing for the final vision. Meditation is meant to develop this essential prerequisite. Thought of God, by the very nature of the object, produces gladness, feeds and nourishes the spirit of love, and thus brings about the completion of equipment for the vision. "As is the meditation, so is the love" is the arresting opening of a song of which Sri Ramakrishna was fond. In some other Upanishads the role of the 'heart' is definitely recognized in gaining the vision absolute. The *Mundaka* and *Katha* Upanishads speak of the self-revelation of the supreme Atman as coming to one who is chosen. The choice surely falls on those who have already *chosen to be chosen*. Here meditation is identified with *bhakti* or loving adoration. The *Svetasvatara* clearly states that the final truth dawns on those great souls who have *parabhakti* or highest love. The *Gita* glorifies this *bhakti* beyond all else. The *Isa Upanishad* prays for the self-revelation of God and enjoins self-surrender as the means therefor. The *Taittiriya* has a very significant expression for this attitude; it calls it *pratishttha*, and the word surely stands for unfailing steadfastness and ardent attachment. It is undivided self-merging in meditation, through both thought and love. It signifies dwelling in the Supreme both from the standpoint of continuity of awareness and from that of the integral completeness of the soul's pouring in of itself into the act of meditation. It eliminates interruption as well as reservation. It amounts to an exclusive absoluteness of interest involving the completest renunciation of all other interests. This is the meaning of love of God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength.

## ATTAINMENT OF THE HIGHEST

The final point to be considered is the fulfilment that crowns the life of knowledge. By the highest is meant the state of realization. It is described as a condition in which all regrets are terminated once for all. It is life eternal in which the self of the seeker becomes all that it has in it to become. It is fulness of true being. This attainment of self-unfoldment is named by the word *ananda*. Now the question arises, What constitutes the centre and inward essence of this experience of perfection? The Upanishad clearly answers this question. Self-realization not merely issues from the knowledge of Brahman but consists of the immediate apprehension of Brahman. Knowledge as loving meditation is the means and knowledge as direct vision is the end. This vision is of the nature of joy and hence it is described as *ananda*. This statement signifies the complete identification of the immediate knowledge of Brahman with the final value and goal of life. It implies the rejection of two possible errors: the errors are (a) that the highest ideal to be aimed at is something other than and transcending the insight into Reality, and (b) that the insight into Reality is not itself the highest perfection of life. Experience of Brahman is the highest value and the highest value just consists of the experience of Brahman. It is this identification of the highest fulfilment of life with the immediate apprehension of the supreme Reality that makes the Upanishad speak of Brahman itself as bliss absolute. In many other Upanishads, like *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chhandogya*, this characterization of Brahman as *ananda* is a settled principle. The speciality of the *Taittiriya* is that it gives central importance to it. It characterizes Brahman in two of its philosophical chapters as *anandamaya* and *ananda*. Bhrigu after his prolonged meditative search realizes that Brahman is *ananda* and that as *ananda* it is the cause, controller and termination of the universe. Brahman surpasses matter, life, mind and individual consciousness and is of the essence of *ananda*. It is that the affirmation of which is the source of genuine being for man. It fills the universe and hence life thrives in it and attains to the delight of

abundant life. The basic idea in all this is that the ultimate reality is such that apprehension of it is blissful. It is both *the cause of being* and *the theme for final realization*. It is *rasa*, for to glimpse it is to taste joy. Attainment of it is attainment of joy superme.

What is the ground for this mode of viewing Brahman? The ground is supplied in the *Chhandogya*. There it is argued that the Infinite or Bhuman is the source of joy. The vision of that which contains all within itself is the essence of joy. All affliction is the effect of the vision of the finite. Fragmentary perception, perception of that from which thought must necessarily wander forth, is the meaning of evil in the largest sense. That from which thought cannot wander forth to anything else, for it is all-containing, is source of bliss. Hence perception of the Infinite is joy. The quality of perception is determined by quality of the object. Therefore the infinite entity is itself described as joy. Even mundane joys are due to a partial and mutilated sensing of the Infinite. The joy that accrues to one who beholds the Absolute passes all comprehension and utterance. It is too full to leave room for regrets, anxieties and apprehensions. It is such that the highest of earthly attainments fade into insipid trivialities in comparison. This is the highest heaven of achievement that the Upanishads in general and *Taittiriya* in particular speak of. It is everlasting for there can be no objective cessation or subjective withdrawal. Hence the *Vedanta Sūtras* deny the possibility of all relapse from this destiny. The Upanishad symbolizes it in chants of ecstasy. It is the *Brahma-nirvana* of the *Gita*.

The aphorism that "the knower of Brahman attains the highest" is truly the message of Vedanta.

# *The Perennial Freshness of the Upanishads*

## I

In the history of Western thought, the tradition of Idealistic Philosophy has come to be named 'the Perennial Philosophy', both in technical treatises and popular writings. It is this line of Philosophical thinking that is recorded in all the requisite majesty in the Upanishads. Among the Upanishads—which are many—the most ancient ones, about ten in number, reach the highest level of vision, while the later ones descend to more popular and sectarian modes of thought. These ancient Upanishads may be taken as representing Perennial Philosophy at its best. All subsequent philosophising in Indian Culture are attempts, with varying degrees of success, to recapture and articulate in some kind of scholastic order their fundamental insights. What I propose to dwell on in my lecture is not the Perennial Philosophy as such—which has been brilliantly presented by Prof. Nikam—but its inexhaustible freshness which survives all the subsequent systematizing interpretation. It is a genuine paradox that these most ancient works of Vedanta carry imports that surpass in their altitudes and aspirations, all that later thinking has built up through exhausting labour on their foundation. The Upanishads thus possess a wondrous novelty, and it is a pleasure to contemplate on this freshness which I regard as perennial.

## II

I may permit myself the liberty of indicating the salient points in which the Upanishads manifest their openness to new approaches and their refusal to be confined to forms of religion and philosophy established in the history of Indian thought. It is interesting to watch how the early Vedic outlook gets imperceptibly but surely superseded. The Mundaka and Chandogya

clearly point to the spiritual inadequacy of the mere learning of the Vedas. The Brihadaranyaka lays down the cardinal virtues of Dama, Dana and Daya, which seem to transcend the ritualistic prescriptions of the old Ethos. The Creator is said to have been dissatisfied with the creation of the principal divisions of society but seems to have been gratified by the setting up of the ideals of Dharma and Satya. The Gods that absorbed all the attention of the pious of the Vedic age are brought down to an inferior and derivative status of power in the Kena Upanishad. The cult of rituals is decried in the Mundaka Upanishad as 'Weak Boats'. Instances can be multiplied to show how the world-and-life outlook of the preceding age is subjected to a critical supercession in the Upanishads.

### III

At the same time we can see that the Upanishads are not petrified in the shape of the later theological structures of thought. The Mythological Hinduism with its cults of Vishnu, Shiva and Sakti is not yet born. The well-formed caste system as codified in the Dharma-Sasthra literature is yet to emerge. Preceptors of great stature are found in castes other than that of the priests; such are Janaka, Ajatasatru and Aswapati. There are clear mentions of Brahma-vadins among women. Social fluidity and valuation of truth from all sources are yet possibilities in this age of spiritual voyage. In short, the elaborate and finished mythologies and theologies of the classical Puranic Hinduism are still things of the future for the Upanishads. There is thus a delightful freedom in the spiritual atmosphere of the Upanishads, for which the old order of thought is somewhat dead and the new order of post-Vedic Hinduism is yet to be born. Often we hear of the unsystematic character of the teachings of the Upanishads. The point may be conceded in-so-far-as they portray a spirit that is free from the older and later organizations of doctrinal and practical precepts.

### IV

We can go beyond this negative demarcation of the Upanishadic thinking. The fundamental characteristic of the

dialogues of the major Upanishads is that they portray a fervant and insatiable quest of the spirit. They are neither hymns nor the transmissions of ready-made doctrines. It is needless to say that they are not records of pointless curiosity with no depth of commitment to the inquiry. In fact, as one Upanishad puts it, they are for one who has conquered evil, enjoys the right tranquility of mind and is given to contemplation (Katha). The whole soul of the seeker is concentrated, as it were, in the quest. The atmosphere of the Upanishads is in general surcharged with a passionate thirst for knowledge and we are not treated to any sophistry. The spirit of quest runs through all the Upanishads that matter and, what is more, it remains as a part of their very conclusions. A rough idea of the questions that figure in the Upanishads may illustrate this characterisation. The Isavasya, no doubt, opens with a metaphysical affirmation and follows it with an equally prominent gospel for action. But it ends with a sublime prayer for revelation, a more abundant revelation. The Kena is full of questions and it seeks to discover not the objects of knowledge but the foundation and presupposition of knowledge and life itself. The search for the root of experience is its dominant concern. The Katha Upanishad is an elaborate and grand unfoldment of the answer to the question about the core and destiny of human personality in terms of matter and spirit, of time and eternity. The entire Mundaka Upanishad is in answer to the enquiry concerning the ultimate truth that comprehends all truths. The implication of the enquiry is worked out and it is met in all requisite fulness and poetic grandeur. Mandukya is an exploration into the modes of consciousness and culminates in an enunciation of the unspeakable depths of the principle of consciousness itself. The Aitereya engages itself in discerning the correspondence between Macrocosm and Microcosm without any pretensions to cosmological rigidity and ends in the declaration that Brahman or the Supreme Reality is of the nature of Supreme Consciousness. The finite spirit seeking enlightenment finds its consummation in the infinite and all-enfolding spirit. The Taithiriya Upanishad after significant preliminaries presents the search for Brahman, the infinite

Reality—which only could bring satiation to the infinite quest of man—through various levels of progress and ends in the intuition of the infinite as infinite joy, which passes beyond thought and words. The final note is one of joyful wonder. The exploration does not close but opens up endless vistas. In Prof. Nikam's words, this is rational scepticism combined with rational delight. The Chandogya is one of the greatest Upanishads. Its Summit dialogues concern three questions.

The first question is :

- (1) "What is that by understanding which one understands everything ?" The question, it may be noticed, is one that marks out the distinctive scope of philosophy, for philosophy is an endeavour after a synoptic insight to reality. The knowledge that is to be sought after is not a summation of all the different spheres of knowledge but an approach to the fundamentals of knowing and the basic principle of all existence.

The second question is :

- (2) "What is that by attaining which one has attained everything worthy? This ideal the Upanishad designates as 'Bhuman', the 'Immense' or 'Abundant', in which all the aspirations and values are fulfilled. The Upanishad categorically pronounces that there is no joy in the finite and trivial. 'Nalpe sukhamasti'.

The third question is :

- (3) "What is there in the inmost recess of the heart"? Therein man should seek for the final essence of reality. This course of inquiry is named "Dahara-vidya", the "Science of the Subtle". The inmost reality is Brahman, with all the infinitude of its perfections. Reaching out to it, the human soul is said to attain its proper stature.

The substantial dialogues of Chandogya are taken up by these primordial questions of philosophy.

The Prasna Upanishad, as its name itself signifies, is a search for answers to six questions by six sages and the preceptor makes an honest and unpretentious attempt to offer answers to them.

The Brihadaranyaka is the biggest and perhaps the greatest Upanishad and its central figure is Sage Yajnavalkya. He is pictured in the text as a philosophical hero. All the great dialogues in the Upanishad consist of his wise and profound answers to a multitude of questions. The dialogues are to be viewed as forming three groups. The first group of two—which are rather only one with minor variations—contains Yajnavalkya's discourses in answer to the questions of his philosophically inclined wife, Maitreyi. She is an alert listener and does not take the teachings uncritically. The second group consists of Yajnavalkya's replies to the great questions raised by the other distinguished sages assembled in the court of Janaka, a king-philosopher. The third group made up of a single dialogue is taken up by Yajnavalkya's long discourse to King Janaka himself in answer to his very fundamental questions. Almost all the central questions of philosophy are comprehended in the dialogues of Yajnavalkya.

This brief survey of the methods of inquiry in the principal Upanishads confirms the proposition that the moving spirit in them is that of a free and boundless quest for absolute truth and absolute value. In one word, we may characterise the Upanishads as a quest after the infinite. The attitude of inquiry keeps alive their freshness, especially as the questions asked spring from the depths of the human spirit in all ages and among all the peoples of the world, in so far as they are reflective.

## V

While such is the spirit and temper of the Upanishads, we can go forward to their philosophical affirmations. The entire philosophy of the Upanishads centres round the concept of a transcendent Reality named Brahman. The term Brahman is connotative and it signifies infinite being. The Upanishads exalt

it beyond the empirical world of the mundane universe of nature and the finite minds such as we are. It is declared to be one and indivisible. Further, it is also affirmed as spiritual, of the nature of consciousness. The concept of this supreme spirit is the Central doctrine of the Upanishads, and it is variously designated as Atman, Paramatman, Purusha, Uttama-purusha, Sat or simply Jyoti. The very Transcendence ascribed to it renders it an entity of surpassing wonder. With such a principle as the heart of their conception the Upanishads always carry a freshness and novelty of import, for they depart radically from the obvious, the familiar and the conventional, the finite manifold of temporal existence. Their very remoteness from the passing trivialities of the empirical order invests them with a fascinating mysteriousness not to be compassed by our habitual understanding. By their countless paradoxes the Upanishads keep up their uncomprehended grandeur. They further maintain that the unawareness of this reality is the basis of all evil and to seek it by a contemplative endeavour is to reach fullness of life. The Transcendent is thus invested with Supreme Value and the power of imparting perfection, whose other name is Ananda. The Upanishads are firm and clear in this orientation.

## VI

There is a further point of marvellousness, 'Ascharya', in the conception of Brahman. It is not a sheer 'Other', a surplus category added to the stock of empirical categories, such as Jiva and Jagat, going beyond them in every significant sense. On the contrary, it is their immanent ground, permeating soul, from which they spring into being, in which they exercise their functions whatever they be and to which they return in their states of inoperativeness. Whatever worth they acquire is in strict consequence of the presence of Brahman in them. In reality Brahman is the inner substance of the entire realm of existence. Transcendence would end in a stark dualism, were it not for this sustaining immanence of the super-cosmic supreme in the otherwise meaningless and unaccountable world-order. The Cosmos is taken up and transmuted into a self-expression

of the Absolute in this conception. This is the cardinal point in declarations such as 'Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma', 'Purusha Eva Idam Sarvam'. "Atmaiva Idam Sarva" As the Taittiriya Upanishad has it, the highest principle of the metaphysical hierarchy is the pervasive substratum of all the lower orders of existence.

The marvellousness of the transcendent supreme overflows and covers the totality of the cosmic order with its own hues and fragrance, sublime and fascinating. There is nothing in existence, which cannot transport into rapture its unlooker by virtue of its divine content. All that the Gita glories in, in its theory of Vibhuti, is anticipated in principle in the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman's immanence. The first and greatest sentence of Isavarya communicates this illuminating perception of the Upanishadic seers.

The immanence of the transcendent Brahman seems to stand as the fundamental and comprehensive metaphysical proposition of the Upanishads. It sweeps away, as it were, the notion of the insignificant in the picture of reality, as nothing is bereft of the inward light and glory of Brahman. There is no vacuous existence. All is packed with value, the value that flows out of the source of all value. The consciousness that is awake to this ultimate position cannot but revel in the exuberance of spirit, which comes of the elimination of the insignificant in life.

## VII

It is to be remarked at this stage that the wonder and freshness of the Upanishadic vision is not exhaustively captured in any one of the Vedantic systems which purport to set forth in an orderly form the teachings of the Upanishads. It looks as if the inspiration of these originals out runs the later formulations. This is a bold assertion that needs some measure of substantiation. All these systems take their basic framework from the Vedanta-sutras of Badarayana. The Sutras are designed to resolve the apparent contradictions and remove the ambiguities in certain passages in the Upanishads. They intend to give a coherent and clear shape to the doctrines of the basic texts. In

addition they offer a dialectical defence of the resulting philosophy. Much that is non-controversial and enjoys luminous clarity is left out in the re-consideration. This selective character of the dialectical formulation is amply demonstrated in the form of practically every Adhikarna or topical section of the Brahma-sutra, wherein a doubt is presented, a *prima facie* view is then stated and then a decisive conclusion is argued out. This procedural structure cannot compress within itself all that is of significance in the body of the Upanishadic vision of reality. The design of the Brahma Sutra is therefore, such that it cannot include within itself the total import. Following up this finding, we can take a cursory view of the representative systems to see if they exhaust all that the Upanishads signify and if they do not contain strands of thought not contemplated in them. For instance, the bifurcation between Saguna Brahman, the God of Theism, and Nirguna Brahman, the Absolute, is hardly to be found in decisive terms in any of the Upanishads. The distinction is vital for the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara. In the same way, the unreality of the Cosmic manifold is nowhere set down with all the desired clarity and firmness. But Advaitic insistence on the unity of Ultimate Reality is a faithful derivation from the Upanishads. The Theistic Schools such as Visistadvaita and Dvaita seem to reflect correctly the immanence of the transcendent God-head without the controversial postulates of the Nirguna Brahman and Maya ; but charmed by the personalistic conception of Brahman, they easily glide in the hands of lesser exponents into anthropomorphism. The right balance between Divine Supremacy and Divine accessibility is not always consistently maintained. In both the trends the finished Vedantic schools seem to suffer from tight formulations hardly agreeing with the almost formless intuitions of the Upanishadic seers. While Advaita is abstract with a vengeance, as it were, the theistic Bhakti versions of Vedanta sometimes humanise the Divine at considerable philosophical cost. Later Buddhism seems to get re-born somewhat in Advaita, and the Epics and Puranas mould the Theistic Schools of Vedanta into theological shapes. The consequence is that the original vastness and openness of conception fade out. Frigidity of thought,

Buddhistic or Puranic invades Vedanta and robs it of its original adventurousness and creativity of exploration. The Upanishadic spirit is one of commitment without dogmatism. But in historical Vedanta the two go together. Hence we can hazard saying that the Upanishads have a primieval freshness outstepping the bounds of the system-builders.

It is of course arguable that the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara is a valid elaboration of the Monism of the Upanishads and the theologies of the Theistic Schools are capable of a richly symbolic interpretation. Even conceding these plausible lines of vindication the general observation can stand. The Upanishads are like the Purusha of the Purusha-Sukta, only one quarter of His glory forming the universe of ours, and three other quarters going beyond it. Analogously a part of their import gets systematised in the historical schools of interpretation and a vastly greater range of it remains unrepresented in their scholastic formulation. The invocatory verse saying that when the Infinite is taken out of the Infinite, what remains also is Infinite, may be stretched to apply to the present situation also. After the Schools are allowed to have their full say, there still remains an immensity in the Upanishads unencompassed in them. The greater commentators are aware of the limitation of their fixation of the meaning of the Upanishads. For instance, Shankara, while opening his commentary on the Katha Upanishad, makes the noble statement ಯಥಾಪ್ರತಿಭಾನಂ ವ್ಯಾಚಕ್ಷ್ಮಹೇ. The freshness and the mysterious depths of the Upanishads stand undiminished and they outlast the utmost exegetical conceptualization. Such inexhaustibility of content is the test of authentic revelation.

## VIII

The Upanishads constitute a body of Revelations and contain a fairly distinguishable theory of knowledge. This theory enables us to make out the pathway to the apprehension of Brahman, their supreme point of concern.

They propound the basic Vedantic view that knowledge is the single road to the attainment of self-perfection in Brahman.

The knowledge is not obtainable from sense-perception or even ratiocination based thereon ನಸಂದೃಶ್ಯತಾ ರೂಪಮಸ್ಯ, ನಚಕ್ಷುಷಾ ಪಶ್ಯತಿ ಕಶ್ಚಿ ದೈನಂ-ನೈಷಾತರ್ಕೇಣಮತಿ ರಾಸನೇಯಾ

Knowledge of the transcendent supreme is to be acquired through a transcendent source. That source is specified as Veda ನಾನೇದವಿನ್ಮನುತಂ ಬೃಹಂತಂ the position so enunciated implies that the sphere of Vedic knowledge ought to concern itself with the super-sensible realm of existence. This principle is standardised by later theorists in the dictum 'Apraptehi Sastram Arthavat'. This adjustment of jurisdiction resolves in anticipation all possible conflicts between Vedantic wisdom and empirical knowledge. Such an autonomy secures for the revelation in question uniqueness and the consequent element of mystery which cannot be removed by the progress of secular science.

But the comprehension of the meaning of Revelation must go forward and must issue in the conviction that the teaching of scripture is rational and logically sound. Hence the Upanishad, advocate the necessity for 'Manana', reflection after 'Sravana's devout reception of the revelation; what is received must be pondered over and must be found logically compelling. There are four lines of reflection that could compel the acceptance of the received contents of revelation. In the first place the contents must be internally self-consistent. The scripture should not say and unsay the same thing. In the second place it should not be such as to be stultified by empirical knowledge or be such as to seek to stultify it. Thirdly, it should be such that it brings about an integration and organic coherence of the entire realm of human understanding. It should be a harmonizing supplement to the rest of knowledge. What would remain a chaos of fragments of unco-ordinating information should be brought to a unified structure of insight by revelation, Lastly, any intellectual endeavour to harmonize and explain the data of experience, independent of the thesis of revelation, must be exhibited as untenable. The negation of the opposite standpoints is one of the negative factors reinforcing the affirmation of the scripture. 'Manana' in this comprehensive form confirms the deliverance of revelation. This knowledge

emerging as reasoned conviction is no final stage of the process. The Upanishads advocate a third stage called Vijnana or Nididhyasana. This can be rendered as meditation or contemplation, dwelling internally on the truth intellectually established by the previous stages. The Upanishads declare that this leads to what is called Darsana or direct intuitive vision of the Supreme reality, which is the ultimate phase of the search for the search for truth. Attainment of this marks the final cessation of ignorance and all the evils accruing from that basic flaw. This is bliss and freedom. The Upanishads—particularly Mundaka and Katha—assert that this fulfilment is not an achievement on the part of the aspirant but a gift of divine grace. It is a gracious self-revelation of the Supreme. What starts with the initial revelation by way of scripture culminates in this ultimate revelation, immediate and object-generated. This is the last and complete miracle in the spiritual voyage of discovery. The element of mystery and wonder crowns the human effort, with all the possibility of a vaster and more stunning novelty in the experience. If the words carrying the tidings of Brahman were to thrill and enchant the recipient, the direct self-discloser of the Supreme Spirit must surely be an unspeakably profounder and vaster thrill and enchantment to the enraptured spectator.

By such a promise of a fulfilment beyond themselves, the Upanishads keep alive, rather enhance and intensify, zestful hope and the excitement of the soul's further adventure. There is no termination of the spiritual quest and every conquest seems to open up powers and prospects of a greater conquest.

## IX

Prof. Nikam, with his deceptive brevity, packs this great discovery of the Upanishads into one of his memorable aphorisms: "The higher we go in our knowledge, the higher we can go". There are three great Upanishads which record failure of knowledge at the summit of the vision of Absolute. The Taittiriya has the dictum twice that words and thought return baffled by the ecstatic experience of Brahman. The Kena propounds the paradox that he who thinks that he knows Brahman,

does not know and that he, who confesses he does not know, knows. The Supreme is known by the unknowing and is unknown to the knowing. The Brihadaranyaka has the formula 'Neti, Neti' five times in the course of its vast progression of enlightened Mysticism. This is no negation in reality no anguish of dark blankness but a triumphant glimpse of what surpasses the achieved comprehension. We have here no negative infinite, but the infinite of abundance. It is a knowing that stretches beyond the known. The right name for this state of consciousness is wonder, Supreme Wonder. The fostering of this Ultimate Wonder is the perennial freshness of the Upanishads. Their fundamental injunction is 'Seek', 'ವಿಜಿಜ್ಞಾಸಸ್ವ' 'ವಿಜ್ಞಾಯ ಪ್ರಜ್ಞಾಂಕುರ್ವೀತ' 'After understanding, proceed towards a Larger understanding, "ತದನ್ವೇಷ್ಟ್ಯಂ ತದ್ವಾವಿಜಿಜ್ಞಾಸಿತವ್ಯಂ" 'It has to be sought, it has to be inquired into.'

## *The Phenomenology of the Indian Philosophical Systems*

[The following paper was prepared by Professor S. S. Raghavachar, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Mysore, on the basis of his lecture on the subject at the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, under the Endowment in memory of the Doraiswamy family, which was given in November 1975. Professor Raghavachar's survey of the evolution of the Indian philosophical spirit provides a valuable broad perspective for students and devotees. —ED.]

*Aum*

The great German philosopher Hegel announced the orientation of his epoch-making system of Idealism in a work entitled *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. In that great work, he set forth what he regarded as the progressive evolution of the human spirit towards the apprehension of Absolute Spirit and described this pilgrimage as a “voyage of discovery.” In this modest lecture I intend performing a similar task, that of discerning the advance of the philosophical spirit in India through the diverse philosophical systems. It is in this specific sense that the term “phenomenology” has been appropriated in the description of my theme. There is a second restriction of subject-matter. I specifically confine myself to the methodologically self-conscious philosophical systems, excluding the direct consideration of the revelation-literature such as the Vedas and Upaniṣads and also the equally fascinating later literature such as the great Purāṇas and Agamas. The distinguishing mark of the systems of philosophy named the *Darśanas* is that they develop their philosophical conceptions on rigorously argued-out epistemological foundations. Under such a delimitation of perspective, much that is immensely inspiring may be missed but there is the compensating advantage of definitiveness of

intellectual content. A restriction of a similar nature has surely operated in Mādhavācārya's great work *Sarva-Darśana-Saṁgraha*. I propose, therefore, to review the philosophical systems of India in a broad way and to bring out the characteristics of the decisive stages of our philosophical history. An inquiry of this nature does contribute to the understanding of the heart of Indian culture and also helps to elucidate the contribution of that culture to the solution of the basic problems of human existence, facilitating man's ascent to a higher altitude of life.

The terms of Professor Kumar's Endowment indicate that the lectures must be on the improvement of human relations through educational and cultural methods. It may appear that a review of Indian philosophical systems hardly falls within this scope. That would not be a correct impression. There is no problem of man which can be competently and adequately resolved without bringing in the illuminating guidance of philosophy. Such is the justification of philosophy by the father of Western philosophy, Socrates. He demonstrated through his immortal dialogues that a philosophically unexamined life is worth nothing and not one of its problems, however mundane, can have the benefit of a conclusive solution apart from a consideration of ultimates. In the Indian tradition, the advent of the *Gītā* illustrates the same law: that the human situation is such that its crises demand answers in terms of first principles, unless we are feeble-minded enough to suspend our inquiries arbitrarily. There is thus an inevitability about philosophy and the issues of life cannot be met apart from the basic wisdom as to what man, God, or reality in itself is. There is no peace for man unless he brings the light of ultimate truth into the cavern of his life. Hence, this concern with philosophy is of vital relevance for the theme proposed under this Endowment.

The earliest intellectually self-conscious systems of Indian philosophy were dominated by the ethical motivation. These were the Jaina and the Buddhist movements. The striking feature of Buddhism is that the great Founder explicitly discouraged metaphysical disputations. To him the human situation with all its frustrations and sufferings was the matter

of primary concern. Along with metaphysics he also eliminated the inherited dogmatic religion and with it went all supernaturalistic preoccupations and codes of rituals. The emerging core of Buddhism was the central doctrine of Dharma, with the four noble Truths and the eightfold Noble Path. Jainism did admit considerable metaphysics but in its doctrine of *Syādvāda* it endeavoured to abolish metaphysical fanaticism. It too rejected the traditional dogmatic religion and its ritualism. Its orientation also was principally ethical and an old pronouncement of great authority is cited in *Sarva-Darśana-Saṁgraha* to the effect : “*Aśravo bhavohetuḥ syād Sāṁvara mokṣakāṇam; Iiiyam Ahratidristih Anyat Asya prapanchavam.*”

These two systems, constituting the first major philosophical phase of Indian *Darśana*, are centred in *Dharma*, and *Dharma* here is pure morality and social codes. Ethical self-cultivation involving ardent compassion is the fundamental principle in both.

There is a marked transition when we pass into the next stage of Indian philosophy. Ethics is subordinated to metaphysics and that metaphysics relates to the *Ātman* or the Self. The comprehension or realization of the *Ātman* in intellectual intuition becomes the primary concern in this epoch.

The main hurdle to this objective was the Buddhist rationalism which had nullified the metaphysics of being and in consequence rejected the category of a substantial Self. The challenge was faced in a systematic manner by Nyāya-vaiśeṣika, which built up a solid theory of knowledge and propounded a metaphysics of enduring substances. The broad-based metaphysics provided a fundamental basis for the concept of a substantial *Ātman*. The school had posited a plurality of substances, though its chief interest was in the soul-substance. The trend is further perfected in Sāṁkhya-Yoga, which transformed the pluralism into a dualism of Spirit and Matter, *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, thus elevating the metaphysical status of the Self. The Self is also conceived in a non-temporalistic manner and the category of Self is placed in secure eminence. But the spiritually oriented tendency reaches its finality in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṁkara.

For this school the Self is not merely non-temporal but also non-dual. There is only one *Ātman*. Further, the realm of matter or non-Self is declared to be merely an appearance set up by a cosmic machinery of illusion. The Self is not merely one but is the reality without a second. The *Ātman*-metaphysics reaches its ultimate destination in Advaita. The popular theistic God is dispensed with and the *Ātman* is the metaphysical fulfilment of what the idea of God aspired after. This is the absolutism of the *Ātman*.

Even as the first group of predominantly ethical philosophies comprises Buddhism and Jainism, and the second group propounding *Ātman*-centered metaphysics consists of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and Advaita Vedānta, the third group, marking the third epoch, is constituted by a number of theistic systems. The predominant affirmation in them is theocentric. The basic concern is with *Brahman* or *Iswara*. Systems such as those of Rāmānuja, Śaiva-siddhānta, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Śaṅkaradeva belong to this category of Darśanas. Barring eclectic and ambiguous formulations, even the Sākta system, with its esoteric ritualism, *Kuṇḍalinī Yoga*, and adoration of the Supreme as the Mother, legitimately falls within this group. The great medieval devotional mystics, such as the Alwars and Nayanmars, and the later minstrels of God, such as Tulasidās and Tukārām, supply perennial inspiration and emotional content to the tradition. The greater Purāṇas such as the *Bhāgavata* and the greater *Āgamas* add mythological and literary material of vast dimensions. Some outstanding characteristics of these systems of philosophy may be distinguished.

For all of them the supreme metaphysical entity, *paratattwa*, is God conceived as an infinite personality. Our source of knowledge concerning this reality is the second-hand mysticism of revelation and the attainable first-hand mysticism of intellectual intuition. Reason, owing to its very limitations, operates in a secondary role: to repel spurious adverse ratiocination. The supreme purport, *mahātāparya*, of all philosophical endeavour is the apprehension of this primeval centre of all being.

This principle is transcendent, not merely in the sense of being supracosmic, but also in the more ultimate sense of qualitative magnificence. This qualitative characterization involves metaphysical attributes such as unconditioned actuality and infinite consciousness, moral attributes such as holiness and grace, and also aesthetic absoluteness. The “*Ānandamaya*” of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* brings out this aspect of abundance.

For these schools, in general, the natural cosmos is a reality and not an illusory appearance. It is true that it sinks into triviality bordering on unreality, if construed apart from God; but when viewed as located in the Divine Ground, it acquires being, intelligibility, and value. The proper word in this context is *Vibhūti* or *Śakti*. Nature does not limit the splendour of God, for it itself constitutes an element of that splendour. Even as positing a finite reality apart from God would be a limit to him, the dismissal of it as illusory would render him imperfect, as the victim of that illusion.

More or less similar is the status of the personality of man. His individuality does not spring from his psycho-physical appendage but is constitutive of his essential being. But this reality of the individual Self is no limitation of God's being because it too forms a *vibhūti* or *śakti* of God, in which a glorious fulfilment of Divine teleology has to be worked out by the creative effort of the individual. So neither *Prakṛti* nor the *Puruṣa* is an illusion and neither of them enjoys substantial being without the sustaining immanence of the Divine. They are substances adjectival to the Supreme.

The glory of finite life lies in the conscious and living self-fulfilment in and through a realization of God through work, knowledge, and love. The final point of this spiritual effort is called *Bhakti*. *Bhakti* is both the means and the end. It is no mere emotion but the rapture springing from fullness of understanding and issuing in self-dedication. The understanding in its turn is a maturation of a life of deeds consecrated to God. This elevation of *Bhakti* beyond knowledge is what marks off these schools of Vedānta from the religion of *Bhakti* resorted to for want of readiness for the rigours of Vedāntic

inquiry. *Bhakti* is no inferior alternative to *Jñāna*, nor is it a preparation for it. It is its fulfilment and consummation. *Bhakti* is the prince of *sādhana*s, *Rāja-vidyā*, and also the *puruṣārtha* of *puruṣārthas* or the *pañcama-puruṣārtha*, as the Caitanya school would describe it.

Such, then, is the general characterization of the third epoch of Indian philosophy.

We may hazard some concluding reflections. The three stages of Indian philosophical thinking have brought forth successively three major interests, ethical, metaphysical, and devotional. It appears that each succeeding phase does not abrogate the earlier one but subsumes it in a larger perspective. The *Ātman* metaphysics does presuppose the ethical equipment; and the theistic trend, while exalting *Bhakti*, does insist upon a clear apprehension of the Self in man as a precondition of seeking for self-enlargement in God. The last phase does definitely inculcate ethical and humanitarian activity as a part of divine service.

When looking for a work in Indian philosophy of the pre-systematic period which embodies all these interests and harmonizes them all without the excesses of partial formulations, it strikes one with the force of a revelation that the *Gītā* is the one Supreme anticipatory and integrating classic. Its initial and unique emphasis on *Karma-Yoga*, elucidating it in the largest sense of ethical idealism, meets the ethical need profoundly. Its exalted presentation of the doctrine of the *Ātman*, particularly in the crucial second and thirteenth chapters, fulfils amply the requirement of the *Ātman*-philosophy. No wonder Śaṅkara excels in his interpretation of the thirteenth chapter. Its pervading spirit of *Bhakti* and the metaphysics of the *Puruṣottama* calling for adoration and surrender have furnished the sustaining authority for all the theistic systems of philosophy. It looks as if the entire evolution of Indian philosophical systems in the three phases constitute a progressive elaboration of what is crisply and pregnantly laid down in this perennial source. It may be added that the highest contribution of Indian thought to the advance and emancipation of man is this scripture of

ever-increasing value. It is a quintessential enunciation of the profoundest truths, which we are re-learning through evolution across the ages. To-learn the message of the *Gītā* is education and culture at their best and has the pragmatic efficacy of improving human relations. What is more, it constitutes the final intrinsic value.

# *The Common Fundamentals of the Great Religions*

The study of comparative religion has dispelled a number of longstanding errors. The most pernicious of them is the belief in the exclusive and sole validity of some one of the living religions. The great living religions like Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism stand or fall together. There is so much of conscious and unconscious affinity and identity of content in them that to repudiate any one of them without damaging the substance of the others is a sheer impossibility. To vindicate one is to furnish grounds for the vindication of others. To discard the Hinduism of the Upaniṣads in a radical fashion would rob Jainism and Buddhism of the doctrine of karma which is fundamental to them. Where would Christianity and Islam be with Judaism completely refuted? Can Vedānta be true and infallible if Taoism is proved a wholly worthless creed? Illustrations of the basic coherence of the great religions can be endlessly multiplied. Therefore the philosophy of religion is compelled to focus itself on the common fundamentals of the mature religions for purposes of elucidation and criticism. A religion adored exclusively too often conceals its kernel from its devotees. With this preamble one may proceed to enumerate the essentials of the great religions.

## I

The first constituent of the great religions is the ethical element. In all of them the principle of self-culture involving a regulation and curtailment of animal impulse is inculcated. No religion has advocated worldliness and hedonism. An element of *tapasya* is an invariable factor in all. Even the most earthbound religion, with only faint notions of the supernatural and the otherworldly, has prescribed emancipation from the slavery to irrational impulses. The good is distinguished from

the pleasant, and that fulness of life is impossible without self-mastery is a universal maxim of all religions. Along with this principle of self control, the ideal of compassion and humanity is inculcated. The concept of the brotherhood of man is a specific contribution of religious consciousness. There is no important religion which has not laid down the maxim of treating one's neighbour as oneself. The definition of the 'neighbour' may be undergoing continual expansion but the maxim itself has been once for all laid down. The moral progress of mankind lies in the progressive expansion of the scope of this rule of life. The rule itself is a bequest of the religious inspiration of the prophets.

One has only to compare the ethical commandments of the Semitic religions with Indian thought on the matter to see the unanimity of religions. The Mosaic rules :

Do not kill

Do not steal

Do not commit adultery

Do not swear

Do not covet

correspond with literal accuracy to the five great vows or *mahavratas* of Jainism. They are *ahims*, *satya*, *asetya*, *brahmacarya* and *aparigraha*. These again are the five points of good conduct (*sila*) specified in Buddhism. They are the *yamas* of Hinduism. The correspondence is perfect. The ruling principles of these commandments are self-control and humanity. That the religions are the sources of the great ethical ideals of humanity needs to be recognized when a final valuation of religion is undertaken. While morality is possible without religion, religion is impossible without morality. It may be more than morality but never less than it. In the inclusive substance of religion, individual and social ethics forms an integral part.

## II

The next fundamental contention of religions is that they contain supreme knowledge. There is no religion without a 'noetic' claim. Mere conduct, however holy, is not the whole

of the meaning of religion. A certain fundamental understanding or insight into the nature of reality is claimed in all the great religions. This insight is not supposed to be laboriously won through human effort. Man's experience of mundane realities and his research and scientific investigation are not held to be the sources of religious knowledge. A mode of knowing transcending empirical methods and even reason and capable of discovering the fundamental realities is posited. All the great religions are committed to a doctrine of mystic revelation. Moses receiving from God the ten commandments, Jesus receiving the approval of the Father in Heaven after his baptism. St. Paul encountering Jesus on his way to Damascus. Mohammed being lifted to prophethood by the transfiguring messages of the Divine, the Buddha gaining the absolute 'awakening' under the Bodhi tree, and Lord Kṛiṣṇa revealing the supreme truth to the despondent Arjuna on the battlefield are the recorded phenomena of mystic revelation in the history of the great religions. They claim knowledge of absolute truth and claim to have received it through divine self-communication. This conception of infallible knowledge through self-revelation of the Supreme is enshrined in the heart of all religions. 'Mere teaching, intelligence and learning of many scriptures do not enable one to gain access to the Supreme. It is attained only by one whom it chooses as a fit recipient of its self-revelation.'<sup>1</sup> This is how the Upanishads state this cardinal principle of religion.

In short, religions claim a mode of direct knowledge other than the normal human ways of perception and inference. This knowledge is supposed to cover a vaster realm of being than even inference, and to be more direct and immediate than even sense-perception. This epistemological contention is one of the constituents of all the great religions.

### III

In their conception of reality, all mature religions affirm a transcendent order of being. The higher order may be conceived as a law, an impersonal principle, or a personal God. There

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1. *Katha Upanisad*, 1.2.2.3. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.3.

are minor differences proceeding from the anxiety to do justice to the varied aspects of the central verity. But all of them assert that there is a Supreme Entity transcending the mundane actualities of nature and humanity. It is held to be self-existent. As such it is unconditioned reality. It is unchanging, for what changes has the roots of its actuality in something beyond itself. It is one. The Buddhistic principle of Cosmic Law, the impersonal Brahman of the Upaniṣads and the Father in Heaven of Jesus admit of these characterizations of self-existence, eternity and unity. It is self-affirming spirit at once surpassing inorganic nature and the finite mind. Buddhism outgrew its naturalistic terminology of the earlier days and boldly championed an idealistic monism in its culminising period of maturity. Confucius never denied the existence of God and did always feel the irresistible fascination of the Tao.

The basic motive in all the assertions in favour of a personal God, whether in Christianity or Islam, is the acknowledgement of the spiritual character of the transcendent. The Upanishads identify the ultimate with Infinite Consciousness. The religions ascribe absolute perfection and qualitative infinitude to this principle. That is the significance of naming it 'Pūrṇa', 'Ānanda' and 'Bhūman' in the Upaniṣads. 'Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect'. The transcendent is spiritual and perfect. It is all that ought to be.

The transcendence of the principle is one half of the truth. It is also immanent. God is the ground of the being of the world. His unity is the source of its orderliness. His supreme wisdom is the source of the light of human thought. It is His perfection that is partly mirrored in the earthly values of truth, beauty and goodness. All else derives its being and worth from the supreme being and perfection of God.

All religions have affirmed with one voice the equal truth of divine transcendence and of divine immanence. They have always resented shallow pantheism and an equally shallow Deism. This is the crucial paradox or mystery of the Divine. It fills the universe and goes beyond it, reducing it to an infinitesimal dimension of its own limitless being. This is the

significance of the passage in the *Gītā* which says that all beings dwell in God yet God does not dwell in them<sup>2</sup>. This is the reason why the Upaniṣads adopt both the negative theology of 'neti, neti' and the positive one of 'sarvam khalvidam brahmo' (all this is Brahman). Thus all the mature religions affirm a Supreme Reality, indivisibly one, unconditioned, spiritual and perfect which is at once beyond and within the world. If one overlooks the minor historically occasioned differences of stress, all the religions are found to converge in their conception of the Supreme Being. An unfettered submission to the great documents of the principal religions produces an irresistible conviction of their philosophical unity.

#### IV

In the highest altitude of religious consciousness as embodied in the greatest saints and prophets, and as treasured in the great scriptures, there is a certain view of the supreme value or purpose of life. God vision is held to be the final goal of human endeavour. Just as in pure science truth is sought for its own sake, in high morality goodness is valued for its own sake, in great art beauty is enjoyed and produced for its own sake, in religion at its highest the finding of God is valued for its own sake. It is no instrumental value. In fact it includes within itself all the other supposedly intrinsic values like Truth, Beauty and Goodness. It is the supreme and all-inclusive value. All the great religions are characterized by the possession of an idea of salvation. Salvation is no maximization of earthly happiness. Nor is it merely a relief from the frustrations of the mundane life. It is an abundance of life achieved through adaptation to and integration with the Supreme Reality.

The cardinal vice for all religions is the life of isolation from the Divine. This isolation may take the form of self-lover or self-will, or the non-cognition of the Supreme. These are all forms of repudiation and are instances of that false freedom

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<sup>2</sup> *Bhagavad-Gītā* 9.4.

which in reality is pure bondage. In opposition to this all the religions have preached the gospel of self-perfection through union with the divine ground of all being and value. We truly live to the full measure of our being when we live in and for the Divine. Abundance of life is the fruition of dedication. In such union with the Supreme is the true freedom that passeth all understanding. It is peace and joy eternal and boundless. The great teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God bring out the various implications of the unitive life. This Buddha spoke of it as Nirvāṇa, meaning the extinction of all that is trivial and corrupt in us. The Upanishads glorify it as 'becoming Brahman.' The *Gītā* combines the two concepts in its oft-repeated term of 'Brahma-Nirvāṇa'. The other religions are also unanimous in indicating that the destination of the soul's journey is the life in God. The ideal may be theistically taken or monistically interpreted as the recovery of identity with the Absolute Being through enlightenment. But whatever the minor differences of interpretation the basic idea is that of oneness with the Deity. This *'idea of oneness as the ultimate purpose of life'* is an essential constituent of all religions.

## V

All the religions contain the teaching of a 'way' to final self-realization. As the *Gītā* brings out the way involves the practical, emotional and contemplative factors. There is no great religion that neglects any of the three paths of Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna. On this question of the coordination of all the resources of our nature in the quest for God, the *Gītā* represents the clearest formulation. But what it formulates is illustrated in all the great religions and prophets.

There is another very significant element in all the teaching of the way. This also seems to be a fundamental constituent of all religions. It is held that the final fulfilment is no achievement by self-effort on the part of man. It is a gift of divine grace. It flows from the life-imparting abundance of God. But grace issues only when man learns to depend only upon grace. Renunciation of the reliance on all else including one's own

exertions and absolute dependence on divine grace are the two conditions that seem to draw out and actuate divine grace. God's grace acts according to the limitless bounty of His nature only when we shed the illusion that we can get 'saved' if rewarded according to our worth. God's grace is limited to the measure of our worth as long as we attach efficacy to our worth. The moment we renounce all claim to worth and wholly look to God's saving power, God begins to act as befits His unlimited grace. It must be vividly realized by us that grace ought not to be in proportion to our worth but must be in proportion to the magnificence of divine love. The renunciation of the feeling of one's own worth and the sole reliance on God's nature together constitute what is called 'surrender' in mystical literature.

The Buddhist formula of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha symbolizes this act of surrender. 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done .... deliver us from evil' is a record of the mood of surrender. The Upanisadic seer praying to be led "from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light and from death to Immortality" is not presenting a claim. He is surrendering his soul with all its aspirations to the Most High and praying to be led. It is an attitude of supplication, waiting for the initiative of the Supreme. This is the inactivity mysteriously spoken of by Lao Tze. The final exhortation of the *Gītā* to Arjuna is that he should abandon all other resources and surrender himself to God alone in all faith and wholeness of soul. He is assured of redemption. The holy Koran opens with a glorious Sura which is considered to contain the quintessence of Islam. In fact, the very term 'Islam' signifies submission to God.

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds !

The compassionate, the merciful !

The king on the day of reckoning.

Thee only we worship and *to thee do we cry for help. Guide thou us on the straight path, the path of those to whom thou hast been gracious, with whom thou art not angry, who go not astray.*

This idea of surrender pervades all the higher religions and marks the last words of prayer in the lives of the greatest in the field of religion. To offer one's ego at the altar of God is the highest act of the religious spirit.

We may now sum up the common fundamentals of the great religions. In all great religions we have :

1. A solid ethical basis inculcating self-control and humanity.
2. A claim to a super-normal access to Reality.
3. An affirmation of a Supreme Reality.
4. The view that the highest purpose of life is integration with the Divine.
5. The idea that the way to perfection lies through surrender.

The writer would feel grateful if these enunciations call forth criticism and amplification. That way a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of Religion may truly arise.



## *Spiritual Freedom* (*The View of Advaita Vedanta*)

[“The Message of the Upanishads” was the subject of Sri S. S. Raghavachar’s previous contribution to *Vedanta for East and West* (May-June 1958). In the present article the scholarly author, who is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Mysore, deals in detail with a vital aspect of that message.]

### *Introduction*

Vedanta, like all other schools of Indian philosophy, offers a conception of ultimate Reality and propounds a method of self-perfection for man. In the course of historical formulation, in spite of the sameness of the sources of inspiration, it became divided into many schools; the most developed of them are the Advaita of Shankara, the Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja and the Dvaita of Madhva. It is worth-while studying the spiritual direction and guidance that each of these movements offers, for therein lies the vital value of any philosophy. Though all philosophy need not be practical, the practical implications of any philosophy ought to be systematically worked out since its bearing on life is not secondary in importance. In what follows an attempt is made to gather together the fundamental principles advocated in Advaita for guidance in life and the plan of spiritual self-culture is sought to be reconstructed in the light of the writings of Shankara and his great disciple. Sureshvaracharya.

### *Metaphysical Fundamentals*

The immediate datum of experience is the self. The physical universe, and also the speculative and theological categories, are constructions based upon immediate experience. Every legitimate metaphysical inquiry should begin with the investigation of the immediate. In the region of the immediate the focal fact is the self, Self-consciousness and self-affirmation are the initial facts.

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The certainty of the self is the first principle of true empiricism and the first axiom of true rationalism.

Advaita directs inquiry to the discernment of this primary datum. What is the self? It is, in the first place, the knower. As knower it is not the known. It has the character of being that in relation to which everything else comes to be known. It 'illuminates' as it were everything else. It is indubitable and undeniable, for doubt and denial are its own functions. So it is described as self-luminous. It has immediacy for knowledge without being an object. The objects of experience, however immediate, owe their immediacy to their relation to the knower. Theirs is secondary immediacy. But the self has primary immediacy since it owes its immediacy to no relation, and constitutes that relation which confers immediacy on whatever else is immediately known. So the self has unmediated self-evidence and in reality is the only self-evident principle. It is other than the known, for by its intrinsic nature what becomes known through its relation to the knower lacks this fundamental character of self-evidence. The self is the pure subject and has no trace of objectivity; and it is no fiction, for cognitive relation to it is what distinguishes a fact from a fiction.

In addition to this character of self-evidence as knower, the self has another feature: it cannot change. Assertion of change in any phenomenon implies the awareness of the change on the part of an unchanging observer. If mutation overtakes the spectator of mutation, he can cognize no mutation. So the knower of every type of change must be beyond change. There may be change 'for' or 'to' a perceiving self, but there can be no change 'of' or 'in' self. Experience of change, in short implies an unchanging experiencer. There is an ineradicable 'eternalism' inherent in every logically honest philosophy of the self.

This twofold character of the self as self-luminous and unchanging furnishes a criterion for distinguishing the self from the non-self. In the ordinary notions of the self, which lie at the foundation of all our thought and action, there is involved a radical misallocation of categories. We mistake the non-

self for the self and the self for the non-self. This error is termed *adhyasa* and the term signifies misidentification of ultimately distinct entities. It is owing to this that the self is identified with the body, the senses, the mental processes of willing, knowing and feeling. But whatever is an object lacks self-evidence and whatever is changing is other than the real self, and as such the body, the senses and psychical processes are to be discriminated from the self. Self-knowledge consists of this discrimination. This discrimination affects the category of the 'ego', the personal self or the self-conscious individual. The ego is that which is marked by self-cognition. But self-cognition implies that the self is cognized by the self, thereby attributing to the self an element of objectivity. Further, ego-consciousness is suspended in states like deep dreamless sleep; therefore even the 'I' or ego, marked by self-cognition, is a hybrid entity. It is a compound containing in addition to the pure self an element of the non-self that needs the mediation of cognition to acquire immediacy. Thus the inquiry into the self effects a sharp differentiation of the self from everything else with which in empirical consciousness it is identified, and finally demonstrates that even the ego must be analysed into the pure self and an element of the non-self. This understanding of the self as more ultimate than the ego is the first phase of Advaita metaphysics.

This self-knowledge leads up to two characteristic conclusions of Advaita :

(a) The external world of supposedly insentient existence cannot be real. In the first place, it cannot be sharply contrasted with the world of dreams and illusions. If the latter is an illusory projection, it is hard to prove that the former is irreducibly real. It exhibits, in the second place, change. What arises and passes away is contingent, and the contingent is that whose denial does not involve a self-contradiction. The contingent is what does not belong to being as such. It is adventitious to the intrinsic character of the real. In the third place, the external world, if it has to be affirmed as real, must be affirmed on grounds supplied by experience. But the experience, presen-

ting everything other than self, is the function of ego. Only the pure self is primarily self-evident. The world presents its credentials for admission to the status of reality to the empirical self. It must act upon the senses and through them on the mind, and the ego functioning through the mind must appropriate it through its acts of cognition. So the self, not working under the limitations of embodiment, is not the self that could encounter the external world. It is not the pure self that experiences the external world of nature, but it is the conditioned self in the form of the ego that does so. This restriction robs the experience of the world of all its claims to veridical character. What could be cognized only by a self not in its intrinsic capacity but in its capacity as an individual experiencer, bearing all the vitiating concomitants of egohood, has no claims to a non-phenomenal status. The ego is a resultant of a false identification of the self with the non-self and what can be experienced by only this false self shares its falsity. The dream world cannot be ontologically higher than the dreamer. What can be seen only by a dreamer is nothing outside the dream. The lunatic's vision of the external world does not confer reality on that world. Even so, the external world presenting itself to the ego of the waking state, which is the self veiled by a threefold embodiment cannot be real (see Shankara on Gaudapada, 4.25). The argument is simply that the empirical world presents itself only to the empirical self, and the empirical self is error-born and as such its experience of that world cannot be non-erroneous.

(b) In addition to this declaration of the unreality of the physical world, Advaita advances the proposition that the pure self is absolutely one. There is no plurality of selves; all that could be taken as principles of individuation pertain to the ego, which is other than the real self. The duality of the higher and lower selves enables the philosopher to account for the apparent plurality of personal selves without damaging the final singularity of the spirit. At the same time the conclusion is drawn that the real self is identical in substance with the supreme Deity.

The supreme Being, named Brahman, is presented in the

Upanishads as the infinite ground of the universe. This concept of Brahman can be theistically interpreted; but the phenomenal character of the external world implies that Brahman as the creator, preserver and destroyer of it cannot be an ultimate principal. The creator-idea of God is a step towards an acosmic Absolutism. When once the notion of the Absolute is reached, we realize that the world supposed to be the effect must be phenomenal, for causation cannot be an ultimate principle. The world is proved to be unreal by several other considerations also. Hence the notion of Deity remains without the implication of real creatorship. Cosmology has an instrumental value, while Brahman in reality has no cosmic functions. Theism for Shankara is a step towards monism.

Now the real self arrived at through self-discrimination cannot be other than supreme Brahman. That cosmic functioning of God is impossible for the individual, and that the limitation of the individual are incompatible with Divinity, are the only two grounds for the theistic refusal to identify the Supreme Being with the individual Self. But the phenomenal character of the world releases the Deity as it were from its cosmic functions. The limitations of the individual pertain to the empirical personality and his inmost self or Atman transcends them as much as any Deity possible could do.

Thus there remain no valid grounds for not identifying the Atman with Brahman. The noumenal ground of the phenomenal universe must also be the noumenal ground of the phenomenal personality which is also part of the universe. If both Brahman behind the universe and the Atman behind personality are absolute, they cannot be held as separate, for there cannot be two Absolutes. In fact if Brahman is infinite, it ought to be one with Atman. If the Atman is the super-empirical self it is claimed to be, it must be one without a second. This identification has the double effect of revealing the infinitude of the Atman and the immediacy of Brahman. The former is not something trivial and limited and the latter is not something remote and postulated. The ultimate principle is both immediate and infinite. It is the initial datum of experience and the

farthest object of human aspiration. Thus self-knowledge resolutely pursued, first of all, analyses the self into the real self and empirical ego and then through that analysis proves the unreality of the external world and the ultimate unity of all selves and their absolute divinity.

### *Suffering and its Genesis*

While this is the metaphysical truth, consonant with the general orientation of Vedanta, Advaita directs its attention to the problem of evil. After all it is evil that stimulates the philosophical quest in the long run, and a philosophy that offers no understanding of the causation of evil is out of touch with the basic realities of life. Sureshwara, in his great work *Naishkarmya-Siddhi*, formulates the causal chain that issues in suffering.

Suffering is the problem in all life. Eradication of it is possible only through a grasp of the mechanism of its genesis. Undoubtedly all living beings, by virtue of their embodiment, become inherently subject to the experiences of pleasure and pain. But the embodiment of a soul in a body is not an uncaused event; it is brought about by deeds of the soul in previous lives. Good acts of the past are responsible for pleasures and bad acts are responsible for misery and pain. This is the well-known law of karma accepted by almost all schools of Indian thought. But what is it which actuates a soul to act rightly or wrongly? What impels one to act? Sureshwara says that desires and aversions are the impulses behind actions. A being free of these could never exert itself to act. The discomfort of having an unsatisfied desire and of being conjoined to a hated object or situation are the two master-motives of life.

But what causes desires and aversions? In the first place, the feeling that one is incomplete, imperfect, and unfulfilled without the objects of desire being realized and without the objects of aversion being abolished is one cause of desire and aversion. A sense of the self's insufficiency or deficiency in the present state is a potent factor in generating desires and aversions. A second cause of this pair of motive-forces is the

belief that there are objects, other than the self, possessing desirability or otherwise. This ascription of desirability and its opposite to objects or situations is surely the cause of desires and aversions. In modern language we can say it is the reading of value-attributes into objects by the subject which goads him to like or dislike them. This attribution of values in terms of desirability or otherwise to objects would be impossible if the subject did not believe in realities other than his self. It is his belief in the reality of a world of objects and situations different from himself that enables him to fancy in it prospects of enjoyment and wretchedness. In other words, attribution of hedonistic values to things of the world presupposes the attribution of reality to that world. It is this ascription of reality to the world and the attribution of insufficiency and imperfection to one's Atman that constitute the twofold basis of misery. But both these beliefs, belief in the reality of the external world and that in the imperfection of the Atman are radically wrong. They are wrong because the Atman is the sole reality and is one with Brahman entirely, and Brahman is perfection absolute and unconditioned.

The illusion of self-deficiency and the illusion of realism and dualism are responsible for misery. How do these illusions arise? They arise as a result of identifying the self with the non-self. As already noted, ascription of imperfection to the self and the belief in an external reality are due to confounding the transcendent, self-luminous and unchanging Atman with something alien resulting in the formation of the artificial empirical self. What makes this wrong self-identification possible? What is the presupposition of *adhyasa*? No misidentification of self would be possible if there were self-understanding. It is ignorance, or non-knowledge or obscuration of the real self that gives rise to misidentification. From that misidentification proceed all the evils of life. So ultimately the cause of suffering is ignorance of the real self. The first cause is *avidya* or ignorance and the last effect is *dukha* or suffering. Shankara puts this causal chain in the formula of *avidya-kama-karma*.

This causal machinery must be mastered and controlled and its power of generating suffering must be annihilated. Suffering cannot be eliminated in the condition of embodiment. Embodiment cannot be eliminated while there are past deeds waiting to produce their results by way of good and evil. The performance of deeds cannot cease when there are still desires and aversions raging unextinguished. Desires and aversions do not cease as long as man attaches hedonistic values to the things of the world and does not see innate perfection in his real self. Attachment of values to things of the world cannot be suppressed as long as the phenomenal world is looked upon as substantial and real. The belief in the reality of that world cannot be removed without the removal of the error that one is the empirical ego. That misconception of the nature of the self cannot be eliminated without a knowledge of the nature of the self. The illusion of self-deficiency cannot be removed without an understanding of the inherent divinity of the self. Thus self-knowledge is the final means for achieving the liberation from suffering.

#### TECHNIQUE OF SELF-REALIZATION

The first principle to be emphasized in the theory of self-realization is that no unenlightened self-exertion can lead to freedom. Bondage is due to ignorance and hence insight alone can lead to emancipation. But works are not wholly useless. In fact the first step in self-culture consists of devotion to works.

(a) A morally good life is the beginning of spiritual life. It is marked by devotion to duties in a spirit of detachment with regard to advantageous consequences. Activity must be charged with an attitude of worship of God. Work must be transmuted into worship.

(b) Such a life of moral goodness purifies the mind. It creates spiritually beneficent dispositions precious to the individual and society. The seeker of freedom becomes a dynamic force making for righteousness in the world. Inwardly he develops a tranquility of mind and a true perspective in regard to values. He sees his ultimate good in the transcendent splen-

dour of the spirit. His zest for the vision of truth acquires steadiness and power. He becomes for the first time a qualified aspirant after knowledge.

(c) The search for knowledge must be guided by the highest motives. Lesser motives can be realized even by half-truths; but spiritual perfection needs nothing but pure truth to render it possible. Hence the search, in order to be fruitful, must proceed from the love of spiritual freedom, backed by the cultivation of the appropriate mental traits and distaste for mundane utilities. A clear discernment of the abiding and transient goods must be there and this leads to renunciation of worldly values and the pursuit of the supreme good. Only such a frame of mind is conducive to the pursuit of truth for its own sake. These qualifications are summed up in the well-known four traditional requisites : (1) discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal: (2) renunciation of the mundane: (3) appropriate dispositions like tranquility and self-control; and (4) love of freedom. The principle is that unless one seeks the highest good through knowledge, one is apt to be satisfied with knowledge that is less than the highest knowledge. Equipped thus the seeker plunges into philosophical enquiry.

(d) Now knowledge obtained through sense-perception is manifestly inadequate. Only what can affect the organism and the senses in it can be matter for sense-perception. But the organism and the senses of perception are physical and only what is physical can act upon them. Nothing super physical can act on them. So sense-perception, by its very nature, is shut out from the super-physical realm of reality. From the imperceptibility of the super-sensuous we cannot at once conclude that it is unreal. The imperceptibility may well be due to the limitation of the scope of our perceptive power. Inferential knowledge is rooted in perception. It is guided by the data provided by perception, though it considerably extends the knowledge furnished by perception. What is altogether beyond perception must be beyond the inference grounded in perception. Verbal testimony claims to be a valid source of knowledge, although it is not grounded in perception. It can supply know-

ledge of the supersensuous and the super-physical, but there is a prejudice against giving credence to Scripture. Sureshwara demonstrates the irrationality of this attitude. He argues that Scripture contains a body of knowledge transcending empirical knowledge. It is internally coherent and meaningful; it contradicts no valid deliverance of perception and inference. As such why should it be disbelieved? The criteria that should be applied in the examination of the claim of any piece of information to truth are novelty and non-contradiction. If it is derived from some other source the merits and defects of the original source determine its truth; if it is contradicted by established knowledge it is falsified. It is these criteria that we apply in examining even the claims of perceptual knowledge. If scriptural testimony fulfils the conditions of novelty and coherence it is sheer perversity on the part of the logician if he withholds assent to it. The Upanishads pre-eminently meet these requirements. Hence they must be conceded to be sources of knowledge. This constitutes the phase of knowledge called *shravana*.

(e) The next phase consists of the rational examination of the contents of the Scriptures. It is this phase that the *Vedanta-Sutras* of Badarayana represent. In this an interpretation of the revealed texts, the reconciliation of their import with empirical knowledge, their defence against possible and actual criticism, and a demonstration of the impossibility of working out a reasoned philosophy without incorporating their affirmations, is undertaken by a Vedantin. The aim is the acquisition of conviction in the received body of truth through an unfettered exercise of the critical spirit. No suppression of reason is demanded. While Vedanta is not rationalistic in the conventional sense of the West, it fosters the utmost exercise of rationality. It is possible to be rational without subscribing to the dogmas of rationalism. This stage of building up conviction through a free employment of reason concerning the import of the received Scripture is named *manana*. While reason rooted in perception, pretending to determine the bounds of reality is discarded, reason as criticism directed to the discernment of

ultimate truth in the data presented through perception, inference and scriptural testimony is worked out as an essential step in spiritual progress.

(f) After conviction is reached, the seeker dwells in the contemplation of the truth thus discerned through reflection and such an awareness of truth becomes continuous and effortless. This habit of contemplation reduces and finally eliminates the long-established predilections and tendencies oriented towards untruth. This is called *nididhyasana*.

(g) Now two objections may be raised and have been raised actually by critics of Advaita :

(1) The ignorance and error supposed to be the root of all evil are sustained by the direct and immediate experiences of life; the self and body are found compounded into a single category: the external world is a fact of perceptual experience; the distinction between man and God is a hard factual duality. How can these facts of direct experience be abolished by the mediate and indirect knowledge gained through Scripture and through reflection based upon it? Even contemplation, however intense and established, can only produce the illusion of direct experience and not genuinely immediate knowledge.

(2) The roots of all evil are the ignorance of the Atman and the confusions resulting therefrom. The knowledge that could remove all these is the knowledge of the Atman. But the Atman is by hypothesis unknowable: it can never be an object; it is the pure transcendent subject. It is precisely for this reason that even so intimate a phenomenon as self-cognition is denied of it. How then can there be knowledge of the Atman?

The answer to both these objections lies in a certain fundamental clarification. It should be reasserted that the self is never less immediate than anything else supposed to be cognized in immediate perceptual experience. It confers on what enters into relation with it 'known-ness', and it is cognitive proximity to it that invests certain facts with the attribute of immediate factuality. But the eternally self-evident self is obscured and confounded in ordinary experience. Though it is self-luminous, there is considerable obscuration and consequent misconstruc-

tion. The process of knowing through *shravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* effects the elimination of obscuration and mis-construction. The self, which was all along self-evident but was partly veiled and therefore mistaken for the non-self, continues to be immediate and self-evident when scriptural, reflective and meditative understanding of it is attained. But that understanding removes the veil of ignorance and destroys the encrustation of confusion. Since the self is never without self-evidence and immediacy, and since the new understanding merely removes the obstructions to the full revelation of its character, the fruition of the triadic process of understanding is not mediate or indirect knowledge ; it is a continuation of the self-luminous immediacy of the self with all the obstructions to its fulness of manifestation destroyed. It enhances the old certainty and immediacy and renders the resplendent self-revelation of the self wholly spotless. There is an ascent from the insufficient and distorted immediacy of ordinary life to a complete and pure immediacy facilitated by the philosophical correction of ignorance and error.

So knowledge of Vedanta does not produce the speculative knowledge of a remote entity, but purifies and perfects the ever-present self-revelation of the only immediate reality by removing the hindrances to the fulness of its glory.

The second objection is answered by the proposition that philosophical insight does not present any reality afresh to the inquiring spirit but only negates its negations. It has a corrective and not a positive function. The Atman may be ultimately non-objective, but what prevents the recognition of the real character of the Atman must be and can be removed by philosophical understanding. The non-objectivity does not stand in the way of putting an end to obscuration and confusion.

(h) Thus we see that the fruition of philosophical knowledge is the immediate experience of the ultimate Reality. The Vedanta definitely champions this kind of transcendent empiricism. It starts with the empirical certainty of the self. It has this stratum of empiricism. It admits the authority of the Scriptures provided they impart novel and non-contradictory information.

There is this element of authoritarianism in all Schools of Vedanta. It does not exclude reason but utilizes it for the purposes of a critical examination of the data of experience in all its dimensions for the final discernment of truth. This type of intellectualism is also found in all schools of Vedanta. But from all these emerges a direct and immediate experience of the ultimate and of the perfection of the ever-shining self-certitude of the Atman with all its veils burnt up. This is transcendent empiricism or mysticism. Thus the way of Vedanta represents a convergence of practically all the principal ways of knowing. The final direct insight into the Atman in all the grandeur of its non-duality and inherent divinity is the *summum bonum* of life and it effects the complete termination of all evil and suffering.

(i) Now what happens to him in whom this illumination has arisen? Does his embodiment cease at once? Sureshwara says that just as the uprooting of a live tree does not make it dry up and become dead wood instantaneously, the liberated individual continues in the state of embodiment till the past deeds that have brought him to that instance of embodiment are completely liquidated. He lives a life of spiritual light and peace radiating sanctity and blessedness. He is indeed beyond good and evil for he is not inwardly divided into what is and what ought to be. The roots of wickedness, namely, ignorance and desire, are wholly annihilated in him. He is good by nature not by moral obligation. He lives communicating his perfection to all to the measure of their fitness for it. He is the real Guru. He lives, but lives the Life Eternal here and now. His embodiment has ceased to be bondage. "The framework of illusion", as Sri Ramakrishna says, has become a "mansion of delight".

# *Sri Shankara and World-Thought*

## I

It is well-known that the spirit of metaphysics found its highest expression in three cultures, those of ancient Athens, Modern Germany and India. We are to record our homage to-day to one of the highest peaks of the Himalayas of Indian Metaphysics. What Śrī Shankara contributed to world's thought by way of metaphysics and its impact on the metaphysical plane of world's thinking is our concern in this Seminar and we will do well to record our tribute with all the devoutness that the endeavour demands. What can be achieved is just an enunciation of the lines of contribution and nothing approaching adequacy of treatment is to be looked for.

## II

In all serious reflection, either in the field of science or philosophy, the human mind finds itself driven to the problems of appearance and reality. What impinges on human consciousness by way of sense-experience and the resultant formulations of common-sense discloses even on meagre scrutiny its status as merely apparent lacking the substance of truth. The distinction between the apparent and the real is almost the beginning of all serious thinking. It is this discovery that actually shocks man into philosophizing, so much so, that Schopenhauer defined philosophy as the technique of getting 'undeceived'. The greatest of the Greek Philosophers, Plato, developed a doctrine of reality, immutable and absolute, transcendent of the perishing particulars of sense-experience. The vision was there but its exposition, as subsequent European thought demonstrated, demanded a fuller and less mystifying articulation. It was given to the German mind to work out in a more rigorous fashion this fundamental insight. In Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' the distinction between the phenomenal and the real is

substantiated into a formidable structure of thought. To him the Western philosophical world owes its doctrine of appearance and reality. But Kant bequeathed a problem with which his successors had to labour hard. He left the nature of the real, the 'things-in-themselves' as he described it, empty of all positive characterization. His successors groped after a tenable conception of the real and they were conjecturing that the transcendent reality may be the basic principle of consciousness itself, which functions empirically as the knowing self in man. Such an identification of the self as the noumenon would complete the doctrine of appearance and reality. In Shankara's metaphysics, this solution reaches its definitive affirmation. The 'Tat' is 'Twam' and whatever comes in the way of the identification of the two is merely an appearance, a display of Māyā.

This is the celebrated doctrine of Māyā and in Shankara's showing it is a cardinal principle of all metaphysical thinking. It is increasingly realized by all serious students of metaphysics that the line of thought initiated by Plato, further developed by Kant, reaches all-round fullness and clarity in the Vedanta of Shankara. One may mention Deussen as a conspicuous exponent of the role of Shankara's marking the culmination of this perennial trend of metaphysics.

### III

The issue between Realism and Idealism, or that between Matter and Spirit is a persistent one in philosophy. There is no age in which it has not entered into dialectical controversy. As it could be expected from his stand on ultimate reality as against appearance, Shankara champions the cause of spirit. That matter is ultimately unreal as matter is the conviction of all Idealism. But there is an outstanding distinctiveness in his approach in contrast to the position of the Buddhist Vigñānavāda and Berkeley in European Philosophy. In all his major works he defends the reality of the external world as against the arguments of Vijñāna-vāda. This is markedly noticeable in his Sūtra-Bhāshya and Brihad-āraṇyaka-Bhāshya. Only by ignoring this fact Shankara can be accused as a Buddhist in disguise.

Shankara's polemic anticipates a great deal the Modern Realistic refutation of Idealism by powerful Realists like G. E. Moore. What is the point of this stand of Shankara? If Idealism attempts to reduce the material world into the conditional Self, as represented by the Vijñāna of Buddhism, the reduction is impossible according to Shankara. The conditioned Self itself carries a great deal of the external world. To exalt it to the status of metaphysical supremacy is a hasty and premature Idealism. Berkeley is no great success either. Apart from the refutation of his position in recent Realism, Hume demolished the Idealism of his predecessor by his penetrating analysis of the Empirical Self. It seems to be that the Self to which Berkeley attempted to reduce the external world is not less refutable. Shankara's manner of establishing the sole reality of Spirit is, perhaps, unique in the history of Idealism. He demonstrates that empirical consciousness is rooted in a primordial misconception or Adhyāsa. This Adhyāsa sets up the empirical ego and that ego sets up the external world. That is the reason why he opens his Sūtra-Bhāṣya with the pivotal elucidation of Adhyāsa. Adhyāsa mixes up the real and the unreal and projects the world of empirical selves and the physical universe. Between the two projections there is no difference in point of reality. Thus Shankara's thought must be described as transcendent or, better still, absolute Idealism. Matter stands annulled from the standpoint of the infinite Self, the Atman. Thus Shankara's Idealism cannot land in subjectivism or solipsism and it is one, for which, the finite and conditioned Self has melted away. The conventional absurdities of Idealism are transcended in this altitude of the Ātman. Even as the distinction between appearance and reality received its most satisfactory formulation in Shankara's Philosophy, the Idealistic stand-point in metaphysics attains maturity of statement in it.

#### IV

Monism is one of the permanent points of view in Metaphysics. It has asserted itself against pluralism and dualism throughout the history of philosophy all over the world. In very

ancient Greek thought it was championed by Parmenides. A little later it was propounded by Plotinus in the framework of a Mysticism, from which practically the whole of European Mysticism has sprung. In modern times it re-appeared in a rationalistic shape in the philosophy of Spinoza. Still later Hegel took it up and reshaped it into his philosophy of the absolute spirit. Shankara's Philosophy is named Monism or better still non-dualism. Let us note these phases of Monism for marking out the specialities of Shankara's thought. We do not have enough material on the philosophy of Parmenides. The fragments that survive clearly make him out as affirming reality as one and eternal and denouncing plurality and temporality. The nature of the one reality is left considerably obscure. Plotinus is a master of Mysticism and his ecstatic adoration of the one is an inspiration rather than a rigorously worked out metaphysical system. Spinoza posits a single substance, God, and attributes to it an infinity of attributes. Of these, extension and thought are the two we can know as they represent the universalized essences of matter and mind. Spinoza is a great thinker and does not permit of cheap criticism. But still the crucial difficulty of his Monism lies in harmonising the plurality of attributes with the single substance of God. He denies neither the many attributes nor does he make God a collective totality. The one reality seems to take in Swagata-Bedha, though it is free from Sajāteeya and Vijāteeya-Bheda. That extension, the abstract essence of matter, should be an integral element in the Divine unity materializes it somewhat. The unity of the central substance does not seem to be well preserved in this otherwise grand structure of Monism. Though the individual material entities and minds or selves do not enjoy any ontological solidity, materiality and thought enter into the inmost constitution of God-head.

It seems to be that though Spinoza had an unmistakably monistic intension, in the actual formulation of his thought he could not get rid of the pluralistic element altogether.

Hegel remarks that Spinoza should not have deified the category of substance but should have ascended to that of the

'subject' or spirit. He himself develops a monism of the Absolute spirit. Hence his is an Idealistic monism. Hegel's Absolute is the highest synthesis of a thesis and antithesis and each of the lower positions is such a synthesis of a still lower thesis and its antithesis. It is the apex of a pyramid built of lower categories organized in terms of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. This dialectical presentation is characteristic of the entire system of Hegel.

The true universal for Hegelianism is 'concrete' in the sense of being inclusive of diversities and Absolute is the highest of concrete universals. In other words, it is a unity in and through diversities. This, in Indian terminology, can only be a form of Bhedābheda and not pure Advaita. Swagata-Bheda is not eliminated but 'sublated' in the specially Hegelian sense of being suppressed and preserved. The Hegelian Absolute is not acosmic, Nishprapancha, but cosmic, Saprapancha. This is a conception similar to that of Bhārthī-prapancha, of which Shankara is highly critical.

It is a highly qualified Advaita. Further, the Absolute of Hegel contains in itself a principle of 'negativity', by virtue of which it goes out of itself to its antithesis and returns to itself by overcoming the antithesis. All that is other than the absolute is generated out of itself and eventually re-absorbed into itself. It is this principle of negativity that accounts for the emergence of matter and the subsequent evolution of spirit out of it. It is evident that Hegel's conception of reality is not absolutely and purely monistic but admits of diverse phases and elements coordinated into a single scheme. At best it can compare with Kashmir Śaivism and anticipates somewhat Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy.

Schopenhauer poohpoohs Hegel a great deal and offers his own version of Idealistic monism making 'Will' the central characteristic of the universal spirit. Will is so intimately blended with finite life that it is hardly possible to extricate it from the implication of finitude.

In this array of types of Monism, we find no system that rescues itself completely from the category of plurality. In

world's thought Shankara's Advaita is the only monism that excludes the 'many' completely. It is unique in point of purity and accords to all types of difference and dualism their rightful places in the realm of Māyā. This distinctiveness should not be overlooked or diluted in anyway. The monistic impulse is carried to its culmination in the Advaita of Shankara. The Brahman of Shankara is Akhanda and Adviteeya.

Unity may, by itself, be compatible with some diversity. In order to obviate even this much of tolerance of plurality, the school of Shankara styles itself non-dualism or Advaita. The negation of plurality is a cardinal point of the doctrine.

This extreme opposition to pluralism seems to be inevitably implied in the basic propositions of the system, its doctrine of appearance or Māyā, its affirmation of the unreality of everything other than the Supreme Ātman and the discernment of a basic principle of error or Adhyāsa as governing the totality of human experience, cognitive, conative and emotional. Jñātritwa, Kartritwa and Bhoktritwa and the consequent dissolution of all that is temporal and material leave no room for a compromise with plurality. Internal distinctions such as that of parts or substance and attribute or cause and effect have no place in the seamless integrality of Brahman.

Thus the three lines of metaphysical thinking, the doctrine of appearance, Idealism and Monism converge into a grand consummation in the philosophy of Shankara. That its impact on world-thought is profound and far reaching is undoubted. But it is the sacred responsibility of us, the devotees of Shankara, to make it more penetrating and vitalizing to justify our devotion. The task is begun and let us continue and amplify it and thus sanctify ourselves in the process.

## V

The specific impact of Śrī Shankara on the world-thought lies in his unique message which has a revolutionizing potency. Before the advent of the Ācharyā human understanding took for granted the solid reality of the empirical world with all its materiality, temporality and manifoldness and was struggling to

rise through uncertain speculative reasoning to a Supreme principle, transcendent and infinite named Īśwara or Brahman. The world was a hard certainty and the Divine was problematic needing demonstration. His entry to the philosophical scene altered profoundly the entire perspective. The Divine principle, was rescued from the realm of the problematic and was established as the impregnably primordial reality, as Satyasya satyam. The empirical order, prapancha was brought down to its legitimate status of the uncertain and the problematic. All subsequent metaphysics exercised itself in characterizing this elusive phenomenal order in precise terms. Śrī Shankara's contribution lies in this revolution of perspective. For him 'Brahma satyam' is the core of metaphysical certainty. May we not say that the proclamation of this paramount verity was the mission of his glorious incarnation?

# *Sri Shankara and the Brahma-sutras*

## I

Mimamsa is a reasoned consideration of Vedic revelation, according to the traditional account of the map of knowledge, evidenced, for instance, in Madhusudana Saraswati's Prasthanabheda, and it consists of two parts or phases called Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa. The former engages itself in formulating decisive rules and conclusions concerning the earlier portion of the Vedas dealing with Dharma or scriptural system of actions. It received its final and authoritative embodiment in the treatise of Jaimini. The second part concerns itself with the later Upanishadic phase of Vedic revelation and its systematisation was the work of Badarayana or Vedavyasa in his Brahma-sutra. The distinctive character of this Mimamsa is that it consolidates the Upanishadic teaching about the Supreme Reality named Brahman and promulgates the pathway of knowledge or Jnana as the exclusive, paramount and final pathway for the achievement of the *summum bonum* of life. The common point in the two Mimamsas is that both of them are devoted to the explication of the import of the Vedas and that by way of rigorous argumentation and polemical vindication. The Principal difference between them is that Purva-Mimamsa is action-centred and the Uttara Mimamsa is knowledge-centred and the theme of the former is Dharma, while that of the latter is Brahman.

Uttara-Mimamsa is also called Sāreeraka-Mimamsa, in that it concerns itself with the Atman, the Ultimate spirit in all and as that spirit is the same as the ontological absolute or Brahman, it is also called Brahma-Mimamsa. The shortest and self-explanatory title of the discipline is Vedanta.

## II

The structure of the Brahma-sutra is superbly conceived.

The first chapter achieves a systematization of the teachings of the Upanishads as presenting Brahman as the ground of the Cosmos and as constituting ultimate reality. The chapter is fittingly designated Samanvayādhyāya. The second chapter named Avirodhādhyāya answers all actual and conceivable opposition to the philosophical position advanced in the first. Not content with the demonstration of the logical consistency of that thesis as against the fallacious objections, it undertakes a fairly full refutation of the metaphysical schools opposed to Vedānta in the manner of free and non-dogmatic critical examination. Thus the thesis concerning Brahman is established on logically firm and invulnerable foundations. The third chapter deals with the concept of Sadhana or planned human endeavour to realise the highest goal of life. All that is involved in the formulation of this Sadhana receives due attention and explanation in the chapter. The last chapter named Phalādhyāya elaborates the nature of that goal itself in clear terms bringing in, all the connected details.

The upshot of the treatise is that Brahman is the ultimate reality, the realization of Brahman by way of knowledge is the road to salvation and that salvation lies in the attainment of Brahman on the part of the soul of man through a process of integration. That consummation is the Supreme value that transcends all temporality.

### III

Such is the bare indication of the theme of the fundamental classic of Uttara Mimamsa. Shankara's Commentary is the earliest one we have though he himself alludes to earlier commentaries for critical purposes. That so early a commentary should be so commanding in style and compass of accomplishment is a standing wonder in the annals of Indian philosophy. It is difficult to word a proper homage to this magnificent work. Something humbler can be attempted with minimum pretensions. Shankara prefaces his commentary with an ostensibly factual description of the human predicament as involving a basic error or misconception termed Adhyasa. The first four

sutras contain a general introduction to the sutras by the Sutra-kara himself and that receives interpretation from Shankara. After this preface on Adhyasa and the introductory four sutras, the commentary takes shape through the four Adhyayas. The positive doctrine of the Brahma-sutra is stated in two levels, according to Shankara, one provisional and preparatory and another final and conclusive. Brahman is sometimes represented in the manner of the God or Iswara of Theism, investing it with the attributes of a personal God, creating, sustaining and withdrawing the Cosmos and possessing all the implied attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence. The second level conception is that it is pure infinite consciousness with no cosmic involvement and no attributes signifying personality. It is a pure impersonal Absolute. Similarly, the world order in the lower stratum of thought is a reality, subject to creation, evolution and dissolution through Divine agency. But from the higher point of view it is an appearance, not, of course, an inconceivable unreality, Asat, but not an irreducible ontological principle not subject to sublation by philosophical enlightenment. The proper word for its ontological status is 'Mithya'. The individual soul described in philosophical parlance, as the Jiva, is other than, and subordinate to Brahman, subject to the afflictions of the mundane order, from the provisional mode of appraisal. But in the higher plane of consideration, as all that constitutes its individuality and finitude belongs to its empirical personality, which is itself an extension of the world order that is 'Mithya', its essential being is absolutely one with that of Brahman understood in the higher view, as pure impersonal absolute consciousness. The line of demarcation between the individual self and the Supreme self is just a creation of the fundamental Adhyasa, even as the external world is. The goal of life in this two-level metaphysical setting also admits of a similar two-level description. It is attainment of God without sharing His cosmic powers and functions according to the ordinary level. But the higher perspective inevitably sets up the ideal of the realisation of the utter identity, rather non-distinction, between the finite individual and the absolute spirit.

The pathway to the goal is devout meditation subsuming under itself the ethics of action to some extent according to the lower view. The final understanding is that Jnana or knowledge in its highest sense of intuitive insight or experience, 'Avagati', transcending meditation, intellection and mundane sense-experience is the pathway to the ideal truly conceived. It is a matter of immediate experiential recovery of the Supreme status.

It is a fascinating task to trace Shankara's thought on the Introduction to the science of Vedanta and his exposition of what he takes to be the higher level of Vedanta. This two-fold task occupies us in what follows.

#### IV

Why does Shankara preface his work with an account of Adhyasa? This is an oft-asked question. Shankara's reason is obvious. The first sutra initiates the process of comprehending Brahman. The need for that comprehension must exist and it must be exhibited that the lack of that comprehension is the entire basis of human bondage. It is not that we should seek to know Brahman because we do not know it but that our not knowing it is the primordial source of all the maladies of finitude. That human bondage is factual and not to be escaped from by mere enlightenment would remove the necessity for enlightenment. Inquiry into Brahman becomes a basic and absolute necessity only if all the evil we are heir to is traceable to the ignorance of it. Hence 'Adhyasa' as the Supreme causal power projecting all evil must be appropriately enunciated before undertaking the inquiry into the reality that Brahman is.

The first sutra 'Athāto Brahma-jijnāsa'<sup>1</sup> contains many significant elements. Atha meaning 'then' is obviously referring to some precondition of the inquiry in question. Shankara refutes the suggestion that Karma-Jijnāsa is the precondition and formulates the precondition as consisting of 'Nityānitya vastu viveka', 'Ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-viraga', 'Samādi Sadhana-sampat' and 'Mumukshutva'. These four factors constitute the back-ground and antecedent to the inquiry into Brahman.

1 अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा । (Br. Su. I-1-1)

The word 'Atah' gives the reason for the inquiry. It is that the ends attainable through actions enjoined even by the Vedas are transient and do not rise to being the *summum bonum* of life. Hence the knowledge of Brahman should be sought. How can we seek to know Brahman? If it is absolutely unknown to us, the very desire to know it, will not arise and exploration into the totally unknown is an impossibility. If it is known to us, no inquiry is necessary. So the quest is either impossible or superfluous. Shankara answers that we already have an idea of Brahman, by the very etymology of the word and by scriptural declarations about it. Further, Brahman is one with our inmost self and that self is a matter of certitude by way of self-consciousness. The Self is the one entity that we cannot negate without self-contradiction. So the inquiry is not impossible. It is also not unnecessary for we have no determinate understanding of Brahman. Endless confusion prevails in the field. Theories starting with pure materialism and rising up to the theistic view that Brahman is the Lord of the individual Atman are mentioned by Shankara. The view that Brahman is the same as the Atman is also recorded at the end. A rational examination of these alternatives must be undertaken and a decisive and conclusive characterisation of the subject-matter must be arrived at. That is knowing *Brahman* and only that *knowing* can put an end to the evils born of error. Hence the inquiry into Brahman is both possible and necessary.

The second sutra<sup>2</sup> offers a definition of Brahman to the effect that it is the source of the origin etc. of the world. Though the definition somewhat anticipates the cosmological argument making god the first uncaused cause of the totality of contingent phenomena forming the world, it is no speculative argument but just a reiteration of passages in scriptures such as the one in the Taittiriya Upanishad. The manner of this causality of Brahman is precisely determined in the course of the rest of the commentary. The final view is not affected by the absence of the terms, *Tatastha-lakshana*, *Swaropa-lakshana* and *Vivarta-*

Vada, in the course of Shankara's commentary. On the whole this sutra moves in the preparatory level of Vedanta as conceived by Shankara.

The third sutra<sup>3</sup> points out that Brāhman is the source of scriptures, and scriptures constitute our source of knowledge concerning Brahman.

Under the fourth Sutra<sup>4</sup> Shankara offers a major elucidation of his position in respect of the fundamental issue of Sadhana. As a preliminary clarification he rejects with such good reasons, the Prabhakara's contention that verbal testimony only inculcates imperatives and cannot communicate information about accomplished reality, so much so the position countered has only historical interest in subsequent thought. The major issue discussed is whether action or knowledge is the means of spiritual release. The case for action is dismissed after a thorough discussion. The advocacy of action reappears taking a subtler form and is asserted that knowledge is also a mental action and nothing else. This gives Shankara an opportunity to discriminate between willed thought in the form of meditation or contemplation and knowledge engendered by the compulsiveness of evidence. It is the latter 'Vastu-tantra' cognition and not the 'Purusha-tantra' practice of the presence of the Divine that constitutes the knowledge that could effectuate man's emancipation. Such knowledge on its very rise ushers in perfection and nothing more remains to be achieved. If, in spite of knowledge man is still subject to the evils of bondage, it is proof positive, that genuine knowledge is not yet reached. So much, perhaps, suffices as a rough statement of the introductory affirmations in Shankara's commentary on the Brahma-sutra.

## V

It is of absorbing interest to watch Shankara rescuing the tenets of the higher and ultimate version of Vedanta, in his conception, from the disproportionately large mass of ideas in the sutras belonging to the presumably preliminary level of

3. शास्त्रयोनित्वात् । (Br. Su. I-1-3)

4. तत्तु समन्वयात् । (Br. Su. I-1-4)

Vedanta. There are, according to him, some top level sutras wherein the Sutrakara effects the crucial ascent. Such sutras are small in number and are placed in extraordinarily central textual contexts. We shall consider some of them for bringing out the distinctive direction of the Vedantic philosophising of Shankara.

(a) While introducing the 12th Sutra in (I pāda) in the first chapter 'Anandamayo Abhyāsāt'<sup>5</sup> Shankara outlines the distinction between the two views of Brahman, the one, compatible with ignorance and enjoining meditations, attributing to it determining characteristics and the other cancelling ignorance and pertaining to authentic knowledge, conceiving it as the unconditioned and attributeless spirit. The Sutrakara, according to Shankara, makes the fundamental decision in the Sutra (Na-sthanatopi parasya ubhaya lingam sarvatra hi')<sup>6</sup> 3-2-11. The sruti may speak of Brahman in two voices, sometimes as Saguna and Saprapancha and at other times as Nirguna and Nishprapancha. But they are not to be accepted as equal in evidential quality and nor are we to accept the Saguna and Saprapancha view as the final truth explaining away the other alternative. Brahman is absolutely and intrinsically attributeless, formless, indeterminate and acosmic. Shankara would endorse Spinoza's dictum that 'all determination is negation' and would discard that of Hegel denouncing 'Pure Being' as 'Pure nothing'. Brahman therefore, is the Absolute and not God, in the language of Anglo-Saxon Idealism.

(b) The ontological status of the external world or creation in so far as it is physical is an important philosophical issue. The second Sutra, as we have seen, posits the creation of world by Brahman. Shankara repeatedly affirms that the world-effect of Brahman is not ultimately real. It has apparent existence only and no noumenal status. This is brought out in two sections.

Under the Sutra (2-1-14) 'Tadananyatwam arambhana

5. आनन्दमयोऽभ्यासात् ।

6. न स्थानतोऽपि उभयलिङ्गं सर्वत्र हि ।

sabdadibhyah',<sup>7</sup> it is argued that the effect must have some difference 'Atisaya' from the cause (2-1-6). Hence the world-order supposed to have evolved from Brahman is unreal. Shankara, while distinguishing the dream-world from the waking-world, hastens to clarify that in final assessment the latter too lacks reality (3-2-4). This Idealistic denial of the reality of the world is further reinforced by a closer analysis of the causation of the world. The world, as a system of contingent things and events, is an effect on all accounts. It cannot originate from pure matter. Nor can it be the creation of an Extra-cosmic God. Shankara discards these possibilities after very thorough discussions (2-2-1<sup>8</sup> and 2-2-37<sup>9</sup>). The only alternative remaining is that Brahman is the material-cum-efficient cause of the world. This is stated very well by the Sutrakara (1-4-23).<sup>10</sup> But there is an insuperable difficulty in explaining Brahman's evolution into the cosmos. 'Kritsna prasaktih niravayavatva sabdakopo va' (2-1-26)."<sup>11</sup> Does Brahman in its totality pass into the world? Its transcendence and super-cosmic reality stand given up in such a hypothesis. Does a part of Brahman become the world, while the rest of it continues in undamaged transcendence and supercosmic glory? That would be attributing compositeness to Brahman rendering it itself a contingent system of effects. Compositeness is one of the admitted marks of an effect. The dilemma forces revision of the notion that Brahman is the world cause. The argument irresistibly recalls the criticism of the platonic doctrine of Ideas in Plato's own dialogue, Parmenides. The only legitimate resolution of the deadlock is to hold that the world is just phenomenal, a distorted presentation of Brahman owing to the fecundity of Maya.

(c) The position of the individual self, the Jiva, in relation to the Supreme Spirit, Brahman, is the central problem in

7. तदनन्यत्वं आरम्भणशब्दादिभ्यः ।

8. रचनानुपपत्तेः नानुमानम् ।

9. प्रत्युरसामञ्जस्यात् ।

10. प्रकृतिश्च प्रतिज्ञादृष्टान्तानुपरोधात् ।

11. कृत्स्नः प्रसक्तिः निरवयवत्वशब्दकोपो वा ।

Vedanta. Shankara's formulation of Vedanta stands or falls with the identity of the Jiva properly understood with Brahman, again, correctly understood. The issue is a little complicated by the Sutrakara resorting to distinguishing them in certain contexts, to taking the Jiva as an 'Amsa' of the other in certain others and also asserting their total identity. Shankara himself tells us that not merely the other philosophers but some Vedantins also affirm that the individual spirit is really other than the Supreme spirit (1-3-16). In this confusing state of affairs, Shankara naturally searches for the sutras that make a definitive pronouncement on this all-important issue. There is one Adhikarana (1-4-19 to 22) wherein the much needed statement is fully obtained. The topic of discussion is the import of the great instruction of Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi (Brihadaranyaka). The section of the Upanishad speaks of the Atman primarily but attributes to it the status of Brahman. In other words some kind of identity is asserted. There are three ways of explaining the identity. One sage, Asmarathya, seems to have propounded the view that since all souls have originated from Brahman, the language of identity is adopted in the dialogue. Audulomi, on the other hand, opines that as the Jivatman merges in the Paramatman in the state of final liberation, such a language of identity is quite natural. Shankara takes the Sutrakara as rejecting both these positions. The first view takes the causal process of the Jivas arising from Brahman as real and the second admits identity as a state to be realized and thereby implies the reality of states. Both are inadmissible assumptions. There is no causation as a fact and there is no such thing as a real succession of states. The sage Kasakritsna is cited by Badarayana as setting forth the third view which he himself admits at the true stand. According to it, the Paramatman or Brahman enters the individual and abides as his Atman. The Sutra reads 'Avasthiteh iti Kasakritsnah'.<sup>12</sup> It is not a matter of mere pre-creation identity or post-mundane identity but timeless and stateless substantive identity. Shankara clinches the position

12. अवस्थितेरिति काशकृत्स्नः । (Br. Su. 1-4-22)

by saying that those who hold to any other view are guilty of three errors.

1. They stultify Vedanta itself and thereby block the pathway to perfection which is of the nature of the flawless illumination flowing from Vedanta.
2. Their description of moksha renders it artificial and transient.
3. Their position cannot stand logical scrutiny.

(d) In the order of conception the goal or goals precede the means and in the order of actualisation the means precedes the goal. To the question as to what constitutes the Supreme end of life Vedanta in general gives a single answer that it is the attainment of Brahman. The difficulties start from this point. The significance of the 'attainment' must be precisely determined. Shankara sees in the Sutras a clear enunciation that it is the merger into or identity with Brahman. But the identity is there as an eternal verity. Hence only the recognition of this identity through a nullification of the illusion of difference between the aspirant and the Divinity aspired after, can be the significance of attainment. The Sutrakara, according to Shankara, is clear that this realisation of non-difference is the *summum bonum*. He fixes up this interpretation taking his stand on one of the final sutras of the text.

'Avibhagena dṛstatwat' (4-4-2).<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the Upanishads may employ the dualistic terminology in their accounts of the attainment of the goal. That is only a figurative mode of statement. The overwhelming evidence is unambiguous in its unitary purport. The Upanishadic passages such as 'I am Brahman', 'that thou art', 'wherein he sees nothing else', etc., are too numerous and emphatic in their non-dualistic import to be twisted away. This is perfectly intelligible. As bondage is a fabrication of the error of dualism, the liberation from it must be of the nature of a non-dualistic integration with the ultimate spirit.

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13. अविभागेन दृष्टत्वात् ।

This Moksha or liberation has no eschatological connotation for Shankara for the simple reason that embodiment is just a matter of misconception and with the removal of that misconception all that has to be got rid of in liberation has been got rid of. But still owing to the momentum of antecedent delusion or of the Karma at the root of the circumstances of the present life in which Sadhana has brought about liberation, the world order of mundane actualities may present itself to the emancipated person, in spite of his being experientially established in non-dualistic realization. This interim position would remain till the complete liquidation of the traces of the delusion and karmic residue. Such a state of emancipation along with the lingering 'lag' of the past bereft of its delusive potency is what is called Jivan-mukti. In the Sutra-Bhashya, Shankara brings in this concept several times and three prominent mentionings of it may be noticed (1-1-4, 3-3-32 and 4-1-15). In the first passage the fundamental proposition that there is no embodiment other than the misconception to that effect is advanced.

“Na hyātmanah mithyājñānam  
Mukta anyatah saśarīratwam”.

The second passage makes the striking point that 'tattwamasi' (that thou art) cannot be construed to mean 'you will become Brahman after death'. The third passage maintains that the paradox of a person being really emancipated and still going through bodily existence with the attendant experiences is a fact of personal experience. "How can the verdict of such authentic personal experience, be disputed on *a priori* grounds?" asks Shankara. "Katham hi ekasya svahrdaya pratyayam Brahmat vedanam dehadhāranam cha aparena pratikṣeptum śakyeta."

(e) The last topic for our consideration is Sadhana. It has been pointed out already that the ultimate Sadhana leading to liberation is Jnana or knowledge. It is not Karma, ritualistic and ethical action, nor is it upasana or devout meditation. It is cognitive realization of the final spiritual identity of Atman and Brahman, both the terms being divested of their popular Psycho-physical and Theistic associations. A decisive discernment in

this regard is a precondition for the apprehension of the import of 'Tattwamasi'. Two Sutras bring out the nature of the Sadhana in question.

“Purusharthotah sabdaditi Badarayanah” (3-4-1)<sup>14</sup>

The content of that knowledge is also distinctly specified. “Ātmēti tūpagachchanti grahayanti cha” (4-1-3).<sup>15</sup> The Supreme one should be apprehended as one's own inmost self.

What could lead to this Jnana is also laid down in the Sutras according to Shankara. Karma is not to be totally rejected in all possible senses. It is not the final means is the point of the assertion that karma is not the means to Moksha. That it is an indirect means of the means is not ruled out. There is the Sutra 'Sarvāpeksha cha yajnādi sruteh' <sup>16</sup> (3-4-26). Shankara clarifies that karma is required for the generation of knowledge and not as an integral supplement to knowledge, rendering the efficacy of the latter by itself partial. The immediately following sutra lays down another equipment as required for the dawn of knowledge and it is said by Shankara to be a more intimate means of Jnana.

‘Samadyupetah syad.....’ (3-4-27).<sup>17</sup> This equipment consists of dispositional virtues such as the control of the sense, that of the mind, detachment from non-spiritual concerns, steadiness in the face of emotionally affecting conditions and contemplativeness. With this two-fold preparation, outer and inner, the aspirant should launch himself towards the liberating illumination.

That illumination itself consists of the stages, Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. There is a controversy in the later Advaitic tradition as to which of these is most important. In Shankara's commentary itself there is no hint of such an uncertainty. Sravana is the assimilation of revelation. Manana

14. पुरुषार्थोऽतःशब्दादिति बादरायणः।

15. आत्मेति तूपगच्छन्ति ग्राहयन्ति च।

16. सर्वापेक्षा च यज्ञादिश्रुतेः। (Br. Su. III-4-26)

17. शमाद्युपेतः स्यात् तथापि तद्विधेस्तदङ्गतया तेषां अवश्यानुष्ठेयत्वात्।

is ratiocination on the data of Sravana, somewhat in the style of the Brahmasutra itself, ending in the stabilized conviction in the truth obtained from Sravana and Nididhyasana is continued contemplation of the truth so established. Now Sravana is introduced in the Sutra 'Sāstrayonitwat' (1-1-3).<sup>18</sup>

'Manana' is indicated in the Sutra 'Sahakāryantara vidhih ..... ' (3-4-4).<sup>19</sup> Nididhyasana is inculcated in the Sutra 'Āvrittirasakrt upadesat' (4-1-1).<sup>20</sup> Sravana leads to Manana which in its turn passes into Nididhyasana, and that culminates in what Shankara calls 'Avagati' and 'Darsana' (1-1-4 and 4-1-1). This is immediate experience or direct realisation of the Brahman-Atman identity. There is one totally unexpected but highly agreeable complication introduced at this stage. Badarayana and Shankara posit that this ultimate unitary vision takes place when the aspirant is in a particular state which is named Samradhana by the former and is interpreted as Bhakti, Dhyana and Pranidhana by Shankara.<sup>21</sup> This admission of the attitude of worship at this climax of the spiritual quest is a surprise. One could understand Bhakti, devout contemplation and surrender in the approach to the lower Brahman or Iswara. But Shankara is unambiguous in his declaration that Bhakti is the state in which the vision of the higher, unqualified and Acosmic Brahman takes place. His words are 'Enam Atmanam nirasta-samasta-prapancham-avyaktam samradhanakāle pasyanti yoginah. Samradhanancha Bhakti-Dhyana-Pranidhanadyanu-sthanam' (3-2-24).<sup>22</sup> It is impossible to do away with this recognition of Bhakti on the part of Shankara at the very summit of the human endeavour after the Impersonal Absolute. The Sutrakara uses the right word 'Samradhana' and support himself

18. शास्त्रयोनित्वात् ।

19. सहकार्यन्तरविधिः पक्षेण तृतीयं तद्वतो विध्यादिवत् ।

20. आवृत्तिरसकृदुपदेशात् ।

21. अपि च संराधने प्रत्यक्षानुमानाभ्याम् । (Br. Su. III 2-24)

22. एनं आत्मानं निरस्त समस्त प्रपञ्चं अव्यक्तं संराधनकाले पश्यन्ति योगिनः; संराधनं च भक्तिध्यानप्रणिधानाद्यनुष्ठानम् । (श्रीशङ्कर)

with the authority of Sruti and Smriti. Shankara, the great commentator, exhibits noble fidelity to his original and says nothing to withdraw or weaken this exaltation of Bhakti. 'Bhakti' deserves to be the last word in our homage to Sri Shankara.

## *‘Neti, Neti’*

### I

In all mystical philosophies such as that of Plotinus, Theological Systems as that of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Idealistic Monisms like that of Shankara, the approach to the absolute reality comes to be formulated in negative terms. The reason for this inclination is obvious. Human thought and language arise in empirical consciousness and are forged in relation to objects and situations obtaining in the materialistic and pluralistic order of experience. Hence no affirmative characterisation of the super-empirical ultimate in terms relative to that order is possible. But an ascent to the absolute must be effected. The only alternative method of access to that altitude should be by negation. The self-cancellation of the lower is the way to the attainment of transcendent. This mode of progress through negation is best exemplified in the Advaita of Shankara and a study of his procedure is found to shed illumination on the entire methodology of transcendentalism.

### II

Shankara enters the Indian philosophical scene not as an originator of a new line of thought but as a commentator, whatever be his intellectual brilliance and spiritual profundity. All his astounding powers of intellect and intuition and his inimitable scholarship are devoutly harnessed to the elucidation, thorough and penetrating, of the perennial classics of vedanta, the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutra and the Bhagavad-gita. It is in the course of his interpretation of these texts, that the negative mode of designating the ultimate principle acquires substantiation. While all these texts illustrate and embody the method, it is particularly in the Upanishads, the really foundational authority, that the method is inculcated in a great variety of ways. In explaining these Shankara presents the negative

approach to the absolute in all requisite amplitude. Among the Upanishads, the greatest and the longest one, the Brihadaranyaka is the focal classic for the purpose. The formula of 'Neti, Neti' is its characteristic contribution. We will do well in attending to Shankara's exposition of the formula, both in the commentary on the Upanishad and in the connected discussions in his interpretation of the Brahma-sutra.

### III

There are two arresting features in this connection in the Brihadaranyaka. In the first place, the 'Neti, Neti' passage is not found in any other Upanishad and is unique to this Upanishad. In the second place, it occurs five times in the Upanishad.<sup>1</sup> We can make out thereby that it is both special and pervasively fundamental to it. In the traditional exegetical estimate, it enjoys both Apūrvata and Abhyāsa. It appears that the first enunciation of the principle is of the greatest importance and the subsequent incorporation of it in the course of the wide ranging Upanishad is just confirmatory of its importance and almost borders on formal acknowledgement.

It is necessary to go through the first passage in some detail. It is the concluding part of a section (Brahmana) named Mūrthāmūrta Brahmana. It opens with the declaration that Brahman has two forms (Rūpa), gross (Mūrta) and subtle (Amūrta). The two forms are analysed into two sets of factors, composing the framework of the external world and that of the corresponding individual personality. The details of these factors are not of importance for our purpose on hand. All that is essential to note is that two forms are ascribed to Brahman, the gross and the subtle, and each form finds embodiment both in the Cosmos and the individual living being. The discourse proceeds thence to the heart of the teaching. It declares "Neti, Neti" "Not thus, Not thus". What could this mean? It manifestly signifies an emphatic negation. It is

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1. Bri, 2-3-6, 4-4-22, 3-9-23, 4-2-4, 4-5-15.

further asserted "that there is no other transcending this". Brahman is proclaimed as the 'reality of realities'.

Let us follow the elucidation of Shankara in the commentary on the Upanishad and also his detailed discussion in *Brahma-sutra*, 3-2-22.

(a) What is it that is negated? It cannot be both Brahman and the forms predicated of it. Such a total negation would be absurd, for all negation requires an affirmative basis.<sup>2</sup> Nor can Brahman, the same as the Atman, be negated as it is a self-established and self-luminous reality. It is the pre-supposition of all cognitive affirmations and negations. The negation, in so far as it is the exercise of cognitive consciousness, is itself based on it. The 'Contingent' phenomena can be negated as their non-existence is conceivable. The self is a 'necessary' entity in the sense that its opposite is self-contradictory. The forms attributed to it can be negated without self-contradiction. But why does the sacred text attribute forms to it and then negate them? There is a strong reason behind the procedure. The manifold of existence given in empirical consciousness, is first of all denied independent reality. It has no being outside Brahman as supposed in popular understanding. And then its existence in Brahman as its attribute or form or mode is also denied. That way a total negation of the phenomenal is achieved. The procedure of the Upanishads in this connection is perfectly suited for achieving such a completeness of negation.

(b) Why should predication of forms to Brahman be discarded? Principally there are two reasons. The categories of thought and speech apply validly to the objects of experience and the Atman-Brahman is never an object. It is '*Avishayāntah pāti*', meaning it does not fall into the realm of objects but constitutes the transcendent subject. Further, all our categories of conception and verbalization apply to the pluralistic world of mundane experience and cannot signify the absolute self devoid of all plurality. In this predicament the only way of thinking and utterance that can serve to lead us to Brahman is

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2 *Brahma-sutra* : 2-2-31, 2-3-7, 3-2-22

the negative one by which the empirical encrustation on Brahman may be removed and the self-luminous reality may be allowed to shine irrepressibly in our consciousness unobstructed.

(c) Why does the Upanishad employ two negations? The superficial justification would be that the gross and subtle attributions are cancelled by the two negations. The deeper and radical interpretation would be that the repetition serves to repudiate all possible predications. This is a consummate technique of the text to do away with all positive characterisations.

(d) The Upanishad leaves us in no doubt that it is perpetrating no Nihilism. 'There is no other, transcending this'. This statement means that everything other than Brahman is a fictitious construction destined to pass away on the dawn of enlightenment. This positive intent in spite of the negative characterisation is brought out in the conclusion that Brahman is the "Reality of realities", "*satyasya satyam*".

(e) Shankara discerns an alternative and deeper import of the statement, "there is no other, transcending this". He understands it to mean that there is no way of indicating Brahman other than and superior to the negative process of denying the cosmic manifold. His words are crisp and clear "*Nahi prapancha pratishedha-roopadesanāt Anyat param Adeśanam Brahmano Asti*"<sup>3</sup>. That only when a conditional presentation of Brahman mixed with error is enough for the purpose on hand the Upanishads advance a positive characterisation is his considered observation.<sup>4</sup>

Nothing more seems be needed to emphasise the ultimate status of 'Neti, Neti' as the presentation of the essential nature of Brahman.

#### IV

Human thought and words are bound up with the pluralistic and objective world of phenomena. They cannot be instrumental in cognizing and indicating the ultimate principle,

3. Sutra-Bhasya : 3-3-22

4. Bri-Bhasya : 2-2-6

which is both the ultimate subject and absolutely free from plurality of all kinds. But it is not something which can be negated for it is the substratum of all experience and knowledge including our negative judgements. It is eternally given in self-consciousness. It is an indisputable reality and it cannot be positively affirmed by the inherently vitiated modes of thought and speech. Hence the way, nay, the only way, to it is the removal of the fictitious super-structure imposed on it by the radical error of human understanding. World-cancellation is the most authentic apprehension of the Absolute. '*Nahi Prapancha-pratishedha Roopa-Desanat Anyat param Brahmano Ādesanam Asti*'. Human bondage is, in essence, the super-structure in question and its dismissal through enlightenment by way of 'Neti, Neti' is man's supreme emancipation.

Such is the crux of philosophical position.

## V

There is some complication in post-Shankara Advaita on this question. Samkeshpa Sāreeraka of Sarvajnatma Muni attributes the view of the primacy and ultimacy of the negative propositions of the Sruti to some Advaitin, whom one of his commentators identifies as Mandana and vigorously controverts it upholding the supremacy of affirmative texts such as '*Tattwamasi*'. The negations are held as accessory clarifications. The work commends another Advaitin as sharing this estimate, who seems to have regarded the negations as just restatements of the negative implications of the inclusive and primary affirmations. The later Advaitin is identified by the commentator as Padmapada.<sup>5</sup> But Sarvajnatma Muni apparently violates Shankara's assertion in the Sutra-Bhashya that there is no way of indicating Brahman other than the negation of the world and that in the Brihadaranyaka Bhashya that the fundamental nature of Brahman is signified by the negative texts such as 'Neti, Neti' and positive texts can present only the conditioned Brahman. In the later context the positive texts adduced by

5. Ref. Samkshpea Sareeraka—Chapter I Verses 250-263.

Shankara as instances are '*Vijnanam Anandam Brahma*' and '*Vijnanaghana Eva Brahmatma*'. Traditional scholars may try to get over the difficulty by insisting that the positive texts mentioned are not 'Mahavakyas' and that in relation to Mahavakyas, such as '*Tattwamasi*' and '*Aham Brahmasmi*' 'Neti, Neti' can function only in an accessory capacity.<sup>6</sup> That Shankara placed the 'mahavakyas' above 'Neti, Neti' and the other affirmative texts such as the ones he adduces are lower than it is an arbitrary contention without a shred of evidence in Shankara's interpretations. Further, the Sutra-Bhashya passage that there is no way of instruction about Brahman other than and superior to the negation of the phenomenal order offers insuperable difficulty for devices to get over the primacy of the negative approach.

A closer attention to the 'Mahavakyas' strengthens this conclusion remarkably. A Mahavakya is an identity-proposition in which the subject-term refers to the cognizing self and the predicate signifies Brahman. The two cannot be identified as they appear to the first look, on the surface. The predication of Brahman-hood has to knock-out in the notion of the self all that is incompatible with Brahman-hood. In reality even the supposedly affirmative Mahavakya such as '*Aham Brahmasmi*' exhibits a fundamentally negative character. Sureswara elucidates that Mahavakya precisely in this manner. The serpent in the standard illusion is described as the rope in the correcting judgement for purposes of negating the illusory serpent in its substratum, the rope. The apparently affirmative statement is a cancellation-statement.<sup>7</sup> In 'I am Brahman', the 'I' is pruned down to its essential nature by virtue of the identification propounded. In the traditional Advaitic terminology this is a case of '*Bādhārtha-Sāmānādhī-Karanya*', apposition or co-ordination with a Negative purport.<sup>8</sup>

6. Note—This possibility was suggested by Prof. Hiriyanna in the course of a personal discussion.

7. Sureswara's Naishkarmya-Siddhi, Chapter III—Verse 29.

8. Sutra-Bhasya 3-3-9

The position is not altered in the case of the other equally great Mahavakya, “*Tat-Twa-masi*”. Shankara himself includes it in the category of identification for purposes of negation. He lists four modes of ‘*Sāmānādhikaranya*’ apposition of equation.

- (a) Substantive-and-adjectival relation = *Viseshya-Viseshana*
- (b) Terminological equation = *Ekatwa*
- (c) Superimposition—*Adhyasa*
- (d) Sublation or cancellation—*Apavada*

It is pertinently revealing that he assigns ‘*Tattwamasi*’ to the last type of co-ordinate apposition. This would have been enough by itself to establish the negative character of the identification that obtains in ‘*Tattwamasi*’ in his view.

But he goes further and furnishes a fuller and more forceful demonstration of the negative mode of the import involved. In the penetrating shorter and independent treatise (*Prakarana Grantha*), Upadesa Sahasri, we have the following.<sup>9</sup>

तच्छब्दः प्रत्यगात्मार्थस्तच्छब्दार्थस्त्वमस्तथा ।

दुःखित्वाप्रत्यगात्मत्वं वारयेतामुभावपि ।

एवंच नेतिनेत्यर्थं गमयेतां परस्परम् ॥

The term ‘*Tat*’ has the meaning of the term ‘*Twam*’. The term ‘*Twam*’ has the meaning of the term ‘*Tat*’. Thus the two together sublate the ‘subjection to evil’ in the connotation of ‘*Twam*’ and ‘non-self-hood’ in the connotation of the term ‘*Tat*’. By virtue of the identity propounded, each term mutually works out in relation to the other, the principle of ‘*Neti, Neti*’. The elucidation instals ‘*Neti, Neti*’ in the very core of ‘*Tattwamasi*’. Nothing more seems to be necessary for substantiating the completeness and finality of the ‘*Neti, Neti*’ procedure.

9. Upadesa Sahasri—Verse portion—Chapter 18—verses 197-198

## *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*

The above declaration occurs in the celebrated *Śāṇḍilya Vidyā* of the great Chhāndogya Upaniṣad. The present note attempts to make out its exact significance in the light of Śrī Śaṅkara's elucidation.

(1) Its primary import is monistic. It discards the mundane conception of a plurality of reals. It posits a single reality. 'The all' and 'Brahman' are identified or integrated into a unitary ontological category.

(2) But there can be a lower monism and a higher monism. One may think of the universe as the configuration of a basic material or physical category or think of it as the manifestation of a self or consciousness. The statement opts for the higher monism.

(3) Brahman is the Upaniṣadic term for the Absolute Spirit or Consciousness, Consciousness transcending all finitude, "It is immutable consciousness free from all limitations", so does the Taittirīya Upaniṣad define it.<sup>1</sup> The identification advanced by our text must be sharply distinguished from the lower idealism, such as that *Vijñāna vāda* in Buddhism or the earlier Berkeley in western thought. The external world is not made out to be simply a projection or simple ideation of the finite and individual self. It is not a solipsism that is presented here. It is, if we may say so, a higher idealism, for which the external world is one with the Supreme Self.

So the position advanced is at once a higher monism and a higher idealism. It is not a Naturalistic Monism or Subjective Idealism. So much by way of preliminary clarification. We have to move forward for further clarification.

(4) What is the nature of the identity that is affirmed here? Is it a simple equation, signifying that world is Brahman and Brahman is the world, with no residual dimension at both ends?

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1. सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म॥

That would be simple pantheism for which Brahman in its entirety has become the world. Śaṅkara argues vigorously against such a crude pantheism, because it stultifies Divine Transcendence. The undesirable implication is named “*Kritishna Prasakti*”<sup>2</sup> by Bādarāyaṇa. The identification is not the merging of the ultimate *Ātman* into the empirical manifold of the world, but the other way. It assimilates the world into the supreme. In the unified scheme Brahman appropriates the cosmos and not that it appropriates Brahman. The position supersedes the apparent pantheism of the text. The text seems to be very well interpreted in the *Gītā*. Arjuna exclaims “You are all, because You fully appropriate all”—सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वं :”

(5) Now the question arises whether the pluralistic world taken as identical with Brahman, though not exhausting it and co-extensive with it, remains an irreducible part thereof. In such a conception we have Monism, no doubt, but a Monism for which the ultimate unitary spirit is no unqualified entity, bearing within itself, as it does, the cosmic plurality as an irreducible but integral aspect. Such a possibility is countered by Bādarāyaṇa himself by one expression<sup>3</sup>—*niravayavatva śabdakopa* and Śaṅkara substantiates the rejection. The ultimate being cannot have internal distinction, स्वगत भेद, even as it cannot have सजातीय भेद and विजातीय भेद. It can be no aggregation of parts and cannot have internal differentiations such as agent and action, or part and whole, or substance and quality, or cause and effect. In such a seamless unity, how can we admit Brahman *and* its aspects of the world? There can be no ‘*and*’ in the situation. To import these empirical distinctions into it would finally lead to its dissipation as Brahman. Hence the identification must be construed as the negation of the pluralistic universe leaving the other term, the Absolute-in-itself. It is for the negation of the ‘many’ that the Śruti identifies the ‘one’ and the ‘many’. This expository contrivance serves the purpose magnificently. Śaṅkara leaves us in no doubt as to how he

2. Br. Sū, 2-1-26

3. Ibid.

understands the text. He explicitly lays down the interpretative procedure—सर्वे ब्रह्मन्ति सामानाधिकरण्यं प्रपञ्चप्रविलापनार्थं नानेकरसता प्रतिपादनार्थम् ।—Br. Sū 1-3-1.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the traditional line condensing the Advaitic position ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या records the fundamental insight embodied in सर्वे खल्विदं ब्रह्म on the interpretation of the Āchārya.

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4. There is a fine elucidation of the whole position in Samkara's comments on a concordant passage—

न कार्यप्रपञ्चविशिष्टो विचित्र आत्मा विज्ञेयः । किं तर्हि ? अविद्याकृतं कार्यप्रपञ्चं विद्यया प्रविलापयन्तः तमेवैकं आयतनभूतं आत्मानं जानथेकरसमिति । यथा यस्मिन्नास्ते देवदत्तस्तदानयेत्युक्तः असन्मेवानयति न देवदत्तम् ॥

5. Br. Su. Bhāṣya—1-1-3

## *Sankara on Buddhistic Metaphysics*

The message of the Buddha is accorded great veneration in India at the present time. It is praised for its rationalism, its freedom from superstition and ritualism and its exalted ethics of universal compassion. There is repeated expression of regret over its disappearance in medieval India and a jubilant hope is entertained over the prospects of its revival in the land of its origin. The time-honoured belief that the forms of thought that superseded it have incorporated into themselves all the elements of lasting value in it is not given due recognition. The humanistic ethics and the dissolution of the rigid caste order have undoubtedly passed into the main stream of the Bhakti movement. The specific symbolism and ritualism of medieval Buddhism is not considered as its main attraction by the revivalists. The strictly metaphysical element, the intellectual core of Buddhism is what seems to exercise fascination. The classical Hindu thought attacked precisely this philosophical part of Buddhism. In anything like an honest and systematic effort at the re-affirmation of Buddhist philosophy, a serious examination of the criticism of Buddhist philosophy by the thinkers like Kumarila, Sankara and Vachaspati is called for. One of two conclusions is possible. It may be established that the Hindu philosophers misunderstood the principles of Buddhist thought or that their criticism is faulty and irrational. If this critical labour of answering the Hindu refutation of Buddhism is not discharged properly the movement of Buddhistic revival would lack intellectual substance whatever may be its sentimental exuberance. The first stage in the performance of this essential task is to formulate precisely the lines of refutation to be countered. Sankara is an outstanding representative of the Vedanta critics of Buddhism. In the present essay his criticism of Buddhism is sought to be briefly restated. His adverse reflections on Buddhistic philosophy are scattered

in many of his works. Something like a clear and comprehensive criticism is given in his commentary on Brihadaranyaka. But the fullest examination is conducted in his Sutra Bhashya where a special section is devoted to the examination of the non-vedantic schools of thought. The following is an attempt to restate his fundamental criticisms, as formulated in Sutra Bhashya. In the opening sentences Sankara designates Buddhism as the 'Sarva vainasika' schools, as one that propounds complete annihilation. The designation might imply an evaluation of the Buddhistic ontology as well as axiology. He notes that there are three principal schools of Buddhism. The first school comprising of Vaibhashika and Sutrantika is really constitutive of one inclusive trend and is called 'Sarvasti vada'. The term signifies realism. Acceptance of the reality of 'all' really connotes the acceptance of the reality of the external objective world. The name distinguishes the school from the subjectivist school which denies the reality of the objective world. The second school admits the sole reality of 'Vijnana' or consciousness. This is pure subjectivism. The third school asserts that all, the subjective world as well as the objective, is 'Sunya'. The term 'Sunya' has engendered diverse interpretations of late. For Sankara it signifies the anti-thesis of 'Astitwa' or being and his criticism confirms that he understood it in the nihilistic and not in the transcendentalist sense.

It may be said at the outset that Sankara's criticism of Sarvastivada is elaborate and applies to both Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools which are identical ontologically whatever their differences in epistemology and his analysis and refutation of Vijnanavada is also thorough. Only Sunyavada he considers as not worthy of the labour of refutation and offers only one fundamental argument against it.

### Sarvastivada

This school admits the psychical and physical worlds. It regards the physical world as constituted of the four elements, earth, water, fire and air. The atoms of these elements with their distinctive properties combine into aggregates and they

form the outer physical universe. Analogously the subjective and psychical world is also an aggregate composed of five factors called the Skandhas. They are form (*rupa*), consciousness (*viññana*), feeling of pleasure and pain (*vedana*), conception (*sāmjña*), and the passions (*Sanskara*). It is easy to see that the factors comprise of the body, mind and the three aspects of the mind, feeling, cognition and volition. This psychical aggregate constitutes personality.

After this reference to the central contention of the Sarvastivāda that both the subject and object in the universe are of the nature of aggregates or compounds with no central abiding core of unitary being, Sankara proceeds to frame his criticism.

## I

This first charge is taken over from his argument against the previously examined accounts of cosmic causation. He urges that the aggregation of elements whether subjective or objective needs a controlling cosmic intelligence. The non-postulation of such a principle renders the contingent origination of aggregates inexplicable. If the non-conscious elements are responsible for the process, the process must be unoriginated and ever-lasting. If it has a beginning only a self-conscious spirit must in its freedom initiate it. All the consciousness that is part of the actual world is admitted to be an effect and hence could not initiate the process of causation. The causal nexus is not conceived as an abiding system transcending the particular formation. The constitutive factors being regarded as perishing particulars are incapable of action for action requires the persistence of the agent. Thus the aggregation of the component factors fundamental to the view is definitely unaccountable. The principle of the argument is simple. Creative activity and causation are the functions of spirit. Nothing unconscious can by itself be creative. Buddhism along with all schools of materialism seems to attribute causal efficiency to what is non-spiritual. This tendency is due to the neglect to analyse the implications of causation. Either causation is a subjective illusion or there is a spiritual principle in nature manifesting itself through

the cosmic order inclusive of causation. The principle of causation is a demand of the reasoning intellect and to the extent to which we admit causation to be objective and real, we must admit the objectivity of a cosmic intelligence.

## II

Sankara represents the Sarvastivadin as re-affirming his position. He is made to contend that no abiding spirit is needed to function through cosmic causation. The world process is a flux. It proceeds from stage to stage. If we take a total perspective we find it to be a clinical process. Ignorance generates passions, passions generate consciousness. Consciousness generates names and forms. They bring about the senses. Hence follow sense-contacts. The contacts generate sensations. They lead to craving. Craving leads to effort. Efforts leads to being. Being brings about birth, old age, death, sorrow, grief, misery and mental agony. The number of the items of the series or their definition is not of importance. We have here a chain of life-phases and it is a process that cyclically perpetuates itself. As the basis of this life-flux the aggregation of elements is to be postulated.

Sankara pronounces this restatement as ineffective in meeting the criticism. This progression of states may account for the emergence of the varied conditions of the life-cycle. But it does not account for the basic aggregation of elements in the subjective and objective spheres. It has been argued that the combination of elements is necessary for this life-flux and hence must be postulated. While the necessity for postulating the combination may be accepted, there is still the need to explain how this combination is brought about. The ground of the possibility of combination must be explained, whatever the need for the combination in a particular account of the life-cycle. The combination of atoms to produce the cosmic structure, even on the supposition of their permanence and the existence of supporting individual selves, has been demonstrated to be impossible in the refutation of Vaiseshika theory. In the present theory which admits no supporting selves and conceives of atoms

as perishing the combination is impossible *a fortiori*. Is the life-cycle itself the ground of the combination? Then it could not be based on that combination as supposed. If it is held that the aggregates produce other aggregates, the life-cycle beginning with ignorance falls within these aggregates and this continuous series of aggregates is what forms the cosmos, further clarification is called for. Does an aggregate produce its own kind or does it produce simply another aggregate of some kind? On the first alternative transmigration of the individual, from one species to another as admitted by the schools is ruled out. On the second interpretation the aggregate of one kind must produce in its place an aggregate of another kind and then another aggregate must come about with no law of sequence or regularity of succession. Either transmigration is impossible or in the same life unpredictable succession of different life-possibilities must occur.

### III

Further the combination of the basic elements cannot be the cause of either worldly experience of pleasure or emancipation. Both these processes are possible only for a self which lives continuously from the stage of aspiration to that of fulfilment. If a persistent aspirant is not admitted neither secular enjoyment nor the religious ideal of emancipation is conceivable.

Continuity of personality between the phase of felt need and that of achieved satisfaction is necessary for any process of self-fulfilment.

### IV

The causal series starting from ignorance was admitted as possible and the impossibility of accounting for the necessary combination of elements was demonstrated. Now that provisional admission is withdrawn. Causation cannot be consistently explained by the Buddhistic philosophers of Sarvastivada. The units constituting the causal series are taken as momentary, as perishing particulars. As the effect arises, the cause perishes. With this hypothesis forming the pivot of the school it is

impossible to combine the assertion of causal connection. What perishes in the previous moment cannot produce what arises in the next moment. What is annihilated already cannot discharge the causal function. If it exists while being productive of the new factor it cannot be conceived as momentary. It must be before causing the new and must be while causing it. It may be urged that the existing of the cause is itself the causal function and that no distinction between being and operation is to be made. Even then the effect must bear within itself the character of the cause. In other words the cause must persist as embodied in the effect. That would militate against momentariness. If the effect does not incorporate into itself the cause, as there is no necessary continuity between cause and effect, any effect can arise from any cause. Further how to conceive of origination and destruction? Are they the essential being of things? If they were the words 'origination and destruction', would be synonymous with the names of things. If they are qualifications of things, features making a difference to the essential being of things, then that being running through the states of origination, continuance and destruction would transcend all of them and would not be a perishing and momentary entity. If the entity is different from them it would be something not affected by them and so permanent. If by origin and end, only appearance and disappearance of things to consciousness are meant they would be subjective and the object of consciousness would be originless and endless. Thus causal connection between factors conceived as momentary is utterly unthinkable. If, on the other hand, causation is not admitted, the conception of life as a series of causally determining phases would have to be given up: How the Buddhist could speak of the causal nexus and at the same time deny all permanence is really incomprehensible.

## V

Three forms of non-being are allowed as permanent while all else is asserted to be momentary. They are natural destruction, destruction voluntarily effected and *Ākāśa*. The contention

is that these three are not temporal and are not positive in character. Only what is of the nature of non-existence can be non-temporal. All that is positive, is momentary. Now the two forms of destruction are by no means negative in nature. Everything that ends, ends into something that is positive in nature. The entity that is supposed to be annihilated, first transforms itself into some other form of being. There is no mere annihilation as such. What is ended is recognized as continuing in existence in what succeeds the ending of the entity. The factor that emerges out of every destruction, contains in a new form the substance destroyed. In some cases this phenomenon of the survival of what is destroyed is obvious. In other cases it has to be construed on the analogy of obvious cases. Neither the series, nor the units composing the series is ever subject to total annihilation. Further *Ākāśa* or space is no mere emptiness. Space as such is not emptiness. Parts of space may be so. Thus the states of being filled or empty are determinations of space and not constitutive of space. In Buddhistic scriptures themselves the positive character of space as the locus of other elements is recognized. Thus the three categories are not negative in character. The temporal or non-temporal characters of sheer non-entities cannot be spoken of. They must be positively constituted substances to bear the properties ascribed

## VI

Now the Buddhists affirm the momentariness of all existence. This doctrine is contrary to the fact of memory which establishes the continuity of the remembering consciousness. With regard to an external object, it is possible that recognition and the consequent affirmation of its continuity may just be due to similarity of two objects. But even that mistaking of similarity for sameness needs an identical observer. The explanation breaks down when applied to consciousness cognisant of its persistence. The mistaking of similarity for sameness presupposes the sameness of the observing consciousness.

## VII

The discussion of causation is taken up again. In the first place, if the cause perishes before producing the effect, its non-being must be held the cause. Non-being cannot have any causal power. Non-being of anything cannot give rise to the being of a specific entity. It must be the non-being of the so called cause that could do so. This would amount to making distinctions within non-being, thereby converting it into a form of being. If any entity could arise from non-being, there is no causation. Causation precisely means that an effect springs from a specific entity and not from nothing. When the cause produces its effect, some elements of its being may be lost, it may lose its former state and its residual nature gets re-embodied in the effect. What disappears in the cause in the course of its production of effect is not the cause. What continues of the cause in the effect is the real cause. This disposes of the Buddhist argument that unless the cause is destroyed the effect is not produced. What perishes of the cause is not constitutive of its causal nature and that element in the cause which survives in the effect is the cause. The Buddhist does not see the contradiction between his doctrine of the causation of the world by certain ultimate elements and his contention that effects originate from the cessation of causes.

## VIII

The ethical consequence of the virtual denial of causation is deduced. The basis of moral progress to the attainment of the end through the employment of means implies the reality of the causal process. In fact causation as an ontological principle is the basis for the conception of ends secular and spiritual as realizable through the utilization of appropriate means and methods. Elimination of causation necessarily involves the abandonment of the pursuit of ends through the required means. The cessation of the causal series beginning with ignorance is taken as the highest ideal of life. Is this ideal to be achieved through enlightenment? Or does it happen by itself independent of all effort on our part? The first alternative would militate

against the denial of causation and the view that non-existence originates existence. The latter alternative would render the Buddhist teaching of Marga or the path to Nirvana futile and meaningless.

The foregoing constitute Sankara's chief arguments against Sarvastivada. They may be summed up in a few propositions.

1. The initial combination of basic elements constituting the universe without a cosmic intelligence is impossible.
2. The idea of momentariness of entities rules out all possibility of causal connection.
3. Consequently all moral effort is rendered impossible.
4. Destruction and space are not negative categories.
5. Facts of memory and recognition imply the nontemporality of spirit.

### VIJNANAVADA

Sankara prefaces his criticism of Vijnanavada with a brief but solid statement of that theory. Buddha really aimed at subjectivism. But seeing the realistic predilection of some of his disciples, he preached Sarvastivada to them with a view to educate them gradually to the final truth. The ultimate principle is consciousness. All distinctions like the knower, the known and the knowing and the practical distinctions of end and means are formations within the matrix of consciousness. Even when external objects are admitted, all theoretical and practical functions of consciousness need their representation within consciousness as a basis for all reactions to them. The world as it is for consciousness is the world in which we live. To postulate a world independent of consciousness is superfluous. In support of this doctrine many arguments are advanced.

What exactly is the external object? Do we mean by it the atoms composing the object, the ultimate physical units of existence? We are not conscious of these constituents of objects.

They are not facts of experience. They are entities, inferentially constructed to account for actual phenomena. There is every possibility of these inferential constructions being fallacious. Is the external object, then, the grouping of these into some larger compound? There are fresh difficulties. What exactly is the relation between the components to form a clear conception of this relation. Neither perfect identity nor perfect difference between the two is understandable. Nothing is seen in the compound falling outside the components and the components individually or collectively do not exhaust the compound. The relation is indeed a riddle and hence is a proof of the unreality of the object. The same inexplicability extends to the relation between the universal and individual.

The object cannot affect consciousness and cannot give rise to specific cognitions unless the object is represented by consciousness itself to itself. All perception is representative perception. All apprehension is the apprehension of a mental counterpart of an object. The object may be supposed to cause consciousness to represent the object to itself and the actual knowing is the knowing of this representation. Now if this theory of knowledge is admitted and apprehension is of a psychical image of an object, there seems to be no necessity to postulate the external object. The mind is confined to images and copies constituted by itself. As such there is no possibility of knowing the external object and there is no necessity for postulating it. Further, we know no object unrelated to the subject and no subject unrelated to some object. This mutual relativity is a proof of the fundamental unity of the subject and object. The intimacy of mutual implication is such that there is nothing to prevent the conclusion that the subject and object are finally one. We are familiar with forms of consciousness which are universally admitted to be without external objects. Dreams, hallucinations and illusion supply us ample examples of experience where the subject apprehends objects purely subjective in origin and nature. On the same principle the realm of experience must be idealistically explained. What is true of some forms of experience must be true of all. Multi-

plicity of explanations for essentially similar facts is illogical. Principles should not be multiplied beyond necessity and uniformity of interpretation is the only logical course. It may be asked as to how we explain diversity of apprehensions if there is no diversity of objects. The explanation that consciousness is a storehouse of limitless psychical dispositions and traces and that diversity of traces causes diversity of presentations fully meets the situation. Consciousness is no passive spectator. It is dynamic. It has a rich possibility of endless presentations.

Experience of diversity is nothing but an unfoldment of this intrinsic potentiality of consciousness. It is a spectator of the endless diversities of presentation it itself engenders. There is nothing impossible in the process. Dreams are daily illustrations of the subject itself supplying itself with an endless procession of objective presentations within itself. Subjectivism can quite adequately deal with the fact of multiplicity within experience.

After thus presenting the Purvapaksha Sankara begins the counter-attack.

In the first place, facts of experience must be squarely and fairly admitted. There is no reason in disowning plain and self-evident facts. Knowledge is of varied objects. The consciousness of objects itself presents them as independent of itself. The mode of experience itself claims the objectivity of facts experienced. It is for this reason that even the subjectivist holds that internal facts are cognized *as if they are external*. The very manner of the subjectivist statement betrays him. Externality is a fact of experience. Hence the Vijnanavadin cannot boldly assert the subjectivity of objects. He has to concede that the subjective presentation poses in experience as objective. If the external object was a pure unreality, not given to experience in any way, there is no reason to regard the subjective phenomena as appearing objective. Nothing can be mistaken for the non-existent. Externality is not non-existent if presentations are mistaken for external objects. Thus the external world is an actuality for experience.

It may be contended that since the external object is impossible or inconceivable it has been denied. The reasoning here is wrong. Possibility and impossibility are determined by knowledge. Facts ascertained by strict ways of knowing cannot be explained away on grounds of some preconceived notion of possibility. Whatever is presented by any veridical source of knowledge is a definite possibility. Whatever is unknowable through any such source is impossible. Objects presented as external and real by universally recognized modes of knowledge cannot be quibbled away by any imaginary logic of possibility. Whether the object is different or non-different from the atoms may be indeterminable. But that cannot abolish the indubitable knowledge of external object. If consciousness represents to itself objects, that fact of representation cannot nullify what is represented. The experience of things unsullied by false theory presents them as existing independent of their being experienced. The mutual and concomitant relationship of object and cognition must be construed as indicative of their relationship as means and end and not of their identity.

The knowing and the object known can never be identical. Knowledge is common to all cases of knowledge while the objects known vary from case to case. The object may be the same but the manner of the consciousness directed towards it may vary. This divergence between knowledge and objects in the matter of being one or many proves their mutual difference. Further, consciousness itself is conceived as constituting a process and a flux consisting of perishing acts of consciousness. One act of consciousness perishes before another emerges into being. Therefore, no comprehensive description of the stream of consciousness as a whole, as developed by Vijñānavāda, is tenable. There is no co-existence of the apprehending and apprehended consciousness. Each act cognizes itself and passes away. There is no possibility of developing a total perspective as there is no abiding and all-inclusive principle underlying consciousness.

While experience presents experiencing and objects of experience, why is it that the experiencing consciousness is

admitted and objects are declared unreal? The reason adduced is that consciousness is self-cognized while the objects are not so and as such the claim to reality of the former is irresistible. This is a doubly contradictory statement. Consciousness cannot cognize itself just as fire cannot burn itself and the well-established fact of objects being cognized by consciousness transcending them is contradicted.

It may be objected that if consciousness is to be illumined and cognized by another principle, that latter principle also would require another principle to cognize it and that if consciousness and the principle that cognizes it are both of the nature of knowledge, one cannot be the cognizer and the other the object of cognition. Both the objections are untenable. In the first place, the witness of consciousness, just because it cognizes consciousness does not require another principle to cognize it. The witness is self-luminous and cannot be negated and as such no cognition of it is required. Secondly the witness and the functions of consciousness it witnesses are different in nature, one being the knower and the other known. Therefore, they are not of the same nature to preclude the possibility of the first being the cognizer and the other the cognized. If consciousness is independent of any cognizer and manifests by itself, it only means that it is unknowable and unrelated to any cognizing principle. Thus it becomes a purely imaginary entity. If it is urged that consciousness is of the nature of pure experience and that its being unknown and knower-less is an admitted implication, the actual difficulty remains unsolved. Light, though luminous, shines as illumined by the inner knower, different from and operating through the eye. In the same way, whatever be the luminosity of consciousness in relation to objects, it itself must be cognized by another knowing principle. Consciousness rendering objects known, being itself a determinate process conditioned by the influence of objects, does require to be apprehended by another transcendent spiritual principle. It is characterized by the attributes of the known.

The Vijñānavadin may contend that we, who uphold the self-evident character of the transcendent knower, are simply

accepting his own position that consciousness is self-knowing with just a little modification of terminology. The fact is not so. Consciousness for Vijñānavāda is a flux, composite within itself and has empirical determinations characteristic of the objective. The transcendent self of the Vedāntin is timeless, one, and indeterminate and is divested of all the characteristics of the objective. There is every meaning in its being self-evident while the consciousness functioning in relation to empirical apprehension of object is, by its very nature, objective requiring a transcendent subject to be apprehended. The consciousness whose reality Vijñānavāda asserts is not subjective enough to be really self-evident. The subject of Vijñānavāda is not completely freed from the taint of the objective and hence it needs a subject transcending it to illumine or know it. Thus Buddhist subjectivism has a two-fold limitation. *It does not succeed in reducing the objects of consciousness to consciousness. By its empiricist description of consciousness, it annuls the latter's subjectivity and necessitates the postulate of a transcendent self.*

The phenomena of dreams and hallucination are not very helpful for establishing the subjectivity of waking experience. There is a radical difference. Dreams are subject to sublation or contradiction by waking experience. But the latter does not suffer any such subsequent cancellation. In the face of this fundamental distinction, mere similarity between the two, on the ground that both are experiences, cannot prove the illusoriness of the world of waking consciousness. Argument from analogy discloses a logical weakness. As it is impossible to prove directly the unreality of objects experienced in the waking state, the analogy of dream is pressed into service. Analogy cannot alter the essential nature of things. The radical superiority of waking experience on the ground of its freedom from contradiction cannot be nullified by mere analogy.

The power of consciousness to throw forth diversity of presentation within itself uninfluenced by any objective factor needs demonstration. Experience of objects leaves traces behind in the mind and these traces may reproduce the originating experiences under certain conditions. If there are no objects to

deposit these traces of their experiences in the mind, how there come to be traces in the mind is ununderstandable.

The postulate of the unoriginated existence of traces in the mind is a desperate remedy and throws no light on the issue. Ordinary experience suggests no case of a trace in the mind not being caused by an originating experience. We have cases of experience of previously unknown entities not arising from any antecedent trace and we have no case of a trace of experience not resulting from an experience. By trace we mean some impression of experience subsisting in the mind. Subsistence of impressions needs an entity to subsist in. Now in the theory under discussion no such entity capable of sustaining the impressions and dispositions is admitted.

It is true that a phase of consciousness termed 'Alaya-Vijnana' meaning 'abode-consciousness' is posited. But this is also described as perishing and therefore cannot be the locus of impressions. If this Alaya-Vijnana is regarded as abiding, it can be the locus of impressions. To regard it so amounts to an abandonment of the original dogma of the school ascertaining universal momentariness. All the criticism applicable to Sarvastivada in connection with this dogma apply with the same force to Vijnanavada, as it too subscribes to the dogma of momentariness.

Thus these two branches of Buddhism, Sarvastivada and Vijnanavada; stand refuted.

The third branch, namely, Sunyavada is so thoroughly opposed to all experience and reason that there is no purpose in refuting it. This is Sankara's verdict on the school. He advances only one argument. All negation must be significant. Denial must be based on affirmation. Denial of all existence without affirming some entity as genuinely real is self-destructive. To the extent to which Sunyavada is pure nihilism, it is powerless to repudiate the realism of common consciousness. Effective negation must be more than pure negation.

Sankara concludes his criticism with a general historical reflection. In whatever direction we may formulate the

doctrines of Buddhistic philosophy, on examination it breaks down hopelessly. The weakness is inherent to the very foundations of the system and therefore no particular formulation is responsible for its indefensible character. Liability to mutually conflicting interpretations is no credit to a prophet. The principles that the Buddha propounded are supposed to authenticate all the schools of Buddhist thought which are mutually inconsistent. Such an equivocal prophet cannot furnish guidance to humanity. This, in substance, is Sankara's estimate of Buddhist metaphysics.

# *The Place of Bhakti in Sri Sankara's Gita-bhashya*

## I

Śaṅkara treats the Gīta with the utmost veneration. It is his conviction that it contains the quintessence of the sacred wisdom of the Vedas culminating in the Upanishads. He says 'तदिदं गीताशास्त्रं समस्तवेदार्थसारसंग्रहभूतम्' (Introduction). Hence his views expounded in the course of the exegesis on this central classic ought to be taken as representing his final standpoint. While commenting on the 15th Chapter of the Gīta, he asserts that the chapter sums up its entire message and that, in consequence, it sums up the entire substance of the Vedas. That the Gīta is the pivot of the scriptures on Vedānta is left in no uncertainty. Such is Śaṅkara's estimate of the work and therefore, conclusion based upon his interpretation of the text carry the greatest weight.

## II

Two general principles are enunciated concerning the role of Bhakti. While laying down the qualification for meriting instruction in the Gīta, Bhakti is specified as the necessary and sufficient qualification. "भक्तिमात्रेण केवलेन शास्त्रसंप्रदाने पात्रं भवति" (18-68). It is an integral part of the attitude of Bhakti to rely upon Divine Grace as the determinant of all spiritual attainment and grace is thought of as responsive to the aspiration of the devotee. This principle of responsive grace is stated in all its amplitude of dimensions.

“ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तान् तथैव भजाम्यहम्” 4-11

ये फलार्थिनः तान् फलप्रदानेन, ये अफलार्थिनः मुमुक्षवश्च तान् ज्ञानप्रदानेन: ये ज्ञानिनः संन्यासिनः मुमुक्षवश्च तान् मोक्षप्रदानेन, तथा आर्तान् आर्थिहरणेन इत्येवं यथा प्रपद्यन्ते ये तान् तथैव अनुगृह्णामि । ”

The determining role of grace and the nature of devotion as determining the direction of its operation are both affirmed in a comprehensive formula.

### III

That Śaṅkara understands the Gīta as enjoining on Arjuna the pathway of action is often over-looked and he is alleged to have advocated the pathway of contemplation combined with renunciation of actions. That this is a wrong statement of his position is brought out very clearly in the following passage.

“यस्मात् अर्जुनस्य अत्यन्तं हितैषी भगवान् तस्य सम्यग्दर्शनानन्वितं कर्मयोगं भेददृष्टिमन्तमेव उपदिशति । ”

That the Way of Work involves desirelessness and the renunciation of the fruits of action is fairly well understood in every ancient and modern exposition of the ethics of the Gīta. But it is not equally well understood that the concept of ‘desireless’ action does not exhaust the meaning of Karma-Yōga and in fact it leaves out its core. Karma-Yōga is devotion to work in a spirit of worship. It is no mere duty for duty’s sake, but it is duty for God’s sake. Śaṅkara takes particular care to give prominence to this aspect of dedication to God, in all his deliberate formulations of the principle of Karma-Yōga. For instance :

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्थ अध्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीः निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

मयि वासुदेवे परमेश्वरे सर्वज्ञे सर्वात्मनि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्य - निक्षिप्य, अध्यात्म चेतसा - ‘अहं कर्ता इश्वराय भृत्यवत् करोमि इति अनया बुद्ध्या युध्यस्व ।’

Activity desireless and dedicated to God is the essence of Karma-Yōga and as such involves the factor of Bhakti as a constituent element. Karma abstracted from Bhakti is not the Karma-Yōga of the Gīta according to Śaṅkara, however desireless it may be.

The last verse of the 11th Chapter embodies for Śaṅkara the final import of the Karma-Yōga inculcated in the text as a whole.

“अधुना सर्वस्य गीताशास्त्रस्य सारभूतः अर्थः निःश्रयसार्थः अनुष्ठेयत्वेन समुचित्य उच्यते—”

मत्कर्मकृत् मत्परमः मद्भक्तः संगवर्जितः ।

निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यस्य मामेति पाण्डव ॥

मत्कर्मकृत्—मदर्थं कर्म मत्कर्म, तत्करोताति मत्कर्मकृत् ; मत्परमः करोति भृत्यः स्वामिकर्म न तु आत्मनः परमा प्रेत्य गन्तव्या गतिः इति स्वामिनं प्रतिपद्यते ॥ अयं तु कृत् मामेव परमां गतिं प्रतिपद्यते इति मत्परमः । अहं परमः परागतिः यस्य सोऽयं मत्परमः तथा मद्भक्तः — मामेव सर्वप्रकारैः सर्वात्मना सवोत्साहेन भजते इति नद्भक्तः ।

संगवर्जितः — धन पुत्रमित्रकलत्र बन्धुवर्गेषु संगवर्जितः । संग - प्रीतिः - स्नेहः तद्वर्जितः

निर्वैरः — निर्गतवैरः - सर्वभूतेषु शत्रुभावरहित. आत्मनः अत्यन्तापकारप्रवृत्त-  
इवपि ।

यः ईदृशः — मद्भक्तः सः मां प्रति अहमेव तस्य परागतिः न अन्यागतिः किञ्चित् भवति ।

Here we have the full-orbed scheme of Karma in which actions are done for God's sake, the goal aimed at is God, the agent is filled with love of God, and it frees from all attachment to things earthly and from hatred even towards those who hate. This is zest for action anchored in the love of God and detachment and non-hatred are just the consequential implications. In Karma thus conceived, the factor of Bhakti instead of being merely an element constitutes the very centre and innermost essence.

Śaṅkara does not leave it to us to infer for ourselves this central role of Bhakti in Karma. He affirms it in the most emphatic words. He says “कर्मनिष्ठायाः परम रहस्यं ईश्वर शरणता” (18-65). The deepest secret of devotion to works is the surrender to God. Thus Śaṅkara's elucidation of Karma-Yōga serves to render it an expression and manifestation of the spirit of fervent adoration.

#### IV

So far the task has been easy. Śaṅkara facilitates both by implication and explicit assertion the interpretation that Karma has Bhakti as its inward essence. Doubts may be entertained

as to the possibility of demonstrating the primacy of Bhakti on the plane of Jñāna. But the remarkable fact is that Śaṅkara's commentary on the Gīta presents the presence and primacy of Bhakti in the Jñāna-Yōga with even greater clarity and power. No special investigation in this direction is called for and we see the alround dominance of Bhakti in the pathway of knowledge.

1. The antithesis of knowledge is Māyā. It is the principle of obscuration and delusion. It is characterised by the three aspects Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. It is that by virtue of which creatures do not see the omnipresent and self-revealing reality. It is by overcoming this fundamental hindrance to enlightenment that one comes face to face with the truth of truths.

Twice in the Gīta and Śaṅkara's commentary thereon the method of superseding and passing beyond the obstructive machinery of Māyā is enunciated. It is Bhakti that enables the aspirant to get beyond the three-stranded Māyā.

दैवी ज्ञोषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥ (7-11)

मां च यो अव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।

स गुणान् समतीत्यैतान् ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ (14-26)

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेव मायाविनं स्वात्मभूतं सर्वात्मना ये प्रपद्यन्ते ते मायां एतां सर्वभूतमोहिनीं तरन्ति अतिक्रमन्ति ॥ (7-11)

मां च ईश्वरं नारायणं सर्वभूतहृदयाश्रितं यो यतिः कर्मी वा अव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन ...सेवते स गुणान् समतीत्य एतान् यथोक्तान् ब्रह्मभवनाय मोक्षाय.... समर्थो भवति ॥ (14-26)

2. While Bhakti is thus destructive of the hindrance to the knowledge of ultimate reality, it has an additional positive potency. It is the source of knowledge. Knowledge in its real and final sense is the direct apprehension of the absolute Being, and this apprehension is said to be granted to an aspirant by Divine Grace in response to Bhakti. In other words, Bhakti is the source of knowledge through the Grace of God. This truth is the import of the great final verse of instruction (18-66). Therein Lord Krishna enjoins on Arjuna to abandon all other courses of karma and to resort to Him alone as the sole refuge. In response to such utter surrender. He promises to liberate

him from all sins and exhorts him, in consequence, to put down depression and despair. Commenting on this verse Śaṅkara explains that the Lord liberates the self-surrendering devotee by revealing Himself to him. That signifies that the liberating vision is a gift conferred on the devotee and is by no means an achievement by mere personal effort. This direction of the flow of Divine Grace is made possible by the nature of the devotion involved in the surrender. God saves through knowledge 'स्वात्मभाव प्रकाशीकरणेन' and that self-revelation on his part is a reciprocation to the complete self-surrender on the part of the devotee. In this sense Bhakti is source of Jñāna. This point has already been laid down in the statement 'ये अफलार्थिनः सुमुखवः तान् ज्ञानप्रदानेन अनुगृह्णामि'. Further, the entire doctrine of Jñāna as arising from Bhakti through the mediation of Divine Grace is magnificently elaborated in the Gītā and the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara.

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।  
 ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥  
 तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।  
 नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥ (10-10, 11)  
 तेषां सततयुक्तानां नित्याभियुक्तानां निवृत्तबाह्यैषणानां  
 भजतां सेवमानानां किं अर्थित्वादिना कारणेनेत्याह-  
 प्रीतिपूर्वकं प्रीतिः स्नेहः तत्पूर्वकं मां भजतां....।  
 ददामि प्रयच्छामि बुद्धियोगं बुद्धिः सम्यग्दर्शनं-  
 मात्रत्वविषयं तेन योगः बुद्धियोगः तं बुद्धियोगम् ।  
 येन बुद्धियोगेन सम्यग्दर्शनलक्षणेन मां  
 परमेश्वरमात्मभूतं आत्मत्वेन उपयान्ति प्रतिपद्यन्ते ॥  
 तेषामेव कथं नाम प्रेयः स्यात् इति अनुकम्पार्थं  
 दयाहेतोः अहमज्ञानजं अविवेकतः जातं मिथ्याप्रत्ययलक्षणं  
 मोहान्धकारं तमः नाशयामि आत्मभावस्थः आत्मनः  
 भावः अन्तःकरणशयः तस्मिन्नेव स्थितः सन् ज्ञानदीपेन  
 विवेकप्रत्ययरूपेण....सम्यग्दर्शनं भास्वता (10-10, 11)

3. Moving forward from this characterization of Bhakti as the hindrance of hindrances and as the source of knowledge Śaṅkara boldly identifies it with knowledge. This is the decisive and the most weighty part of the argument. The

identification is made in several crucial points of the commentary. I select five instances.

(a) The seventh chapter classifies devotees of God into four types and the greatest kind of devotion is said to be that of the man of knowledge.

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।  
 आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥  
 तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्तः एकभक्तिः विशिष्यते । (7-16, 17)  
 तेषां चतुर्णां मध्ये ज्ञानी तत्त्ववित् तत्त्ववित्त्वात्  
 नित्ययुक्तः एकभविष्यतश्च अन्यस्य भजनोपस्य  
 अदर्शनात् अतः एकभक्तिः विशिष्यते अतिरिच्यते ॥

(b) In the eighth chapter the supreme spirit is held to be attainable by the highest type of Bhakti and Śaṅkara maintains that this Bhakti has knowledge as its defining characteristic.

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्य लभ्यास्त्वनन्यया । (8-20)

पुरुषः पुरि शयनात् पूर्णत्वाद्वा स परः निरतिशयः यस्मात् पुरुषात् न परं किञ्चित् सः भक्त्या लभ्यस्तु ज्ञानलक्षणया अनन्यया आत्मविषयया ।

(c) In the 13th chapter devoted to the metaphysical discrimination of the spirit and matter and the description of the highest knowledge, there occurs the characterization of that knowledge as “मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी” (13-10). This is the least theistic chapter and it is significant that the supreme knowledge described in it is said to contain as an element the highest Bhakti. Śaṅkara says.

मयि ईश्वरे अनन्ययोगेन अपृथक्समाधिना ‘न अन्यः भगवतो वासुदेवात् परः अस्ति अतः स एव गतिः’ इत्येवं निश्चिता अव्यभिचारिणी बुद्धिः अनन्ययोगः तेन भजनं भक्तिः न व्यभिचरणशीला अव्यभिचारिणी सा च ज्ञानम् ॥

No supersession of Bhakti by philosophical knowledge even at its highest stage of development is contemplated.

(d) The 12th chapter is very important in this connection. Arjuna raises the question of the relative superiority of devotion to the personal God of religion and the contemplation of the impersonal Absolute. Sri Kṛṣṇa praises the former as its fructification is both easy and quick, while the contemplation of the Absolute is difficult, though it also eventually leads to the

same consummation. Then follows a glowing description of the ideal Bhakta who is said to be very dear to the Lord. In the normal course of interpretation by a commentator who accords a lower status to Bhakti than to knowledge, this account of the ideal devotee ought to have been taken as dealing with the devotion to the lower Brahman. But Śaṅkara does not do so. He assimilates it to the ideal of knowledge and sees in it a grand unfoldment of the highest Bhakti that is identical with the highest knowledge. Commenting on the last line :

“मत्परमा भक्ताः अतीव मे प्रियाः ।” (12-20)

he writes

“मद्भक्ताः उत्तमां परमार्थज्ञानलक्षणां भक्तिमाश्रिताः अतीव मे प्रियाः ।”

In reality, the consideration of Śaṅkara's commentary on this chapter is by itself sufficient to demonstrate how he actually welds Bhakti and Jñāna into one integral mode of Sādhana and knows nothing of the Jñāna supposed to surpass Bhakti.

(e) This unity of Jñāna and Bhakti is set forth with all the requisite clarity and adequacy in the 18th chapter.

“ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न कांक्षति ।

समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते परां ॥

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥ (18-54, 55)

ज्ञाननिष्ठः मद्भक्तः मयि परमेश्वरे भक्तिः, भजनं परां उत्तमां ज्ञानलक्षणां चतुर्थीं लभते तत्त्वतः ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरं मामेव । नात्र ज्ञानप्रवेशक्रिये भिन्ने विवक्षिते । किं तर्हि फलान्तरभावात् ज्ञानमत्रमेव ।

शास्त्राचार्योपदेशेन ज्ञानोत्पत्तिहेतुं सहकारिकारणं बुद्धिविशुद्धत्वादि अमानित्वादिगुणं च अपेक्ष्य जनितस्य क्षेत्रज्ञपरमात्मैकत्वज्ञानस्य कर्तृत्वादिकारक भेदबुद्धि निबन्धन - सर्व-कर्मसंन्यास सहितस्य स्वात्मानुभव निश्चयरूपेण यत् अवस्थानं सा परा ज्ञाननिष्ठा उच्यते । इयं ज्ञाननिष्ठा तर्हि भक्तित्रयापेक्षया परा चतुर्थी भक्तिरिति उक्ता । तथा परया भक्त्या भगवन्तं तत्त्वतः अभिजानाति । यदनन्तरमेव (ईश्वर-क्षेत्रज्ञ-भेदबुद्धिः) अशेषतः निवर्तते । अतः ज्ञाननिष्ठा लक्षणया भक्त्या मां अभिजानाति इति वचनं न विरुध्यते ।”

This culminating fusion of Jñāna and Bhakti discredits conclusively any attempt to distinguish them qualitatively and to exalt

Jñāna over Bhakti. Śaṅkara is no party to the spurious intellectualism of the popular Advaitin.

4. Jñāna one with Bhakti is the means of deliverance. But Śaṅkara maintains that deliverance is granted to the devotee with ripe knowledge and devotion by God. The completeness of the means does not render the Grace of God superfluous. On the contrary, it makes the completion of the condition for the descent of Grace. This seems a strangely theistic way of looking at the matter. But Śaṅkara seems definitely to admit this amount of theism. The Grace issues in liberation for the individual if his devotion is of such a character as to invoke that direction of the operation of Grace. As we have already noticed, Śaṅkara understands Lord Kṛishṇa to say

“ये ज्ञानिनः सन्यासिनः सुमुक्षवः तान् मोक्षप्रदानेन अनुगृह्णामि ।”

Deliverance is a gift of Divine Grace and God is prompted to grant this gift by the quality of devotion in the highest illumined devotee. So the liberating grace is directly determined by the excellence of Bhakti.

God is said to take upon Himself the sole responsibility of conserving the spiritual goods and effectuating the highest attainment in the life of the supreme devotee. This proposition is most movingly presented in the elucidation of the following passage :

“अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहं ॥”

(9-22)

Śaṅkara sets down his interpretation in these words :

“ये पुनः निष्कामाः सम्यग्दर्शिनः अनन्याः अपृथग्भूताः परं देवं नारायणं आत्मत्वेन गताः संतः चिन्तयन्तः मां ये जनाः सन्यासिनः पर्युपासते, तेषां परमार्थ-दर्शिनां नित्याभियुक्तानां सतताभियोगिनां योगक्षेमं - योगः अप्राप्तस्य प्रापणं क्षेमः तद्रक्षणं च तदुभयं वहामि प्रापयामि अहम् ।

ननु अन्येषामपि भक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहत्येव भगवान् सत्यं वहत्येव । किंतु अयं विशेषः— अन्ये ये भक्ताः ते आत्मार्थं स्वयमपि योगक्षेमं ईहन्ते । नहि ते जीविते मरणे वा आत्मनः गृद्धिं कुर्वन्ति केवलं भगवच्छरणास्ते । अतः भगवानेव तेषां योगक्षेमं वहति ।”

In the state of absolute self-surrender, the possibility of self-effort is extinguished and hence, Divine Grace becomes the sole operative factor. That it blesses the devotee with the final emancipation is due to the very height of love and adoration that has both extinguished self-effort and thrown the entire responsibility on Divine Grace. *Self-obliteration in devotion is the way for the self-exaltation through the sole initiative of the Supreme.*

The final efficacy of Bhakti in relation to deliverance needs no more effective affirmation. Knowledge independent of surrender and grace is not the means of release. God's grace is the liberating power. This power is rendered operative by knowledge in so far as it develops into absolute self-surrender. The man of perfect knowledge is 'saved' because his knowledge has acquired fruitfulness by becoming self-surrender. In the last analysis it is the Bhakti involved in knowledge that brings about emancipation.

Thus in the elevated plane of knowledge also the role of Bhakti is dominant as (1) it destroys hindrances to Jñāna, (2) it constitutes the source of it, (3) it is one in substance with Jñāna, and (4) as it is the cause of the descent of the emancipating Divine Grace. To Śaṅkara, Bhakti is all in all in spiritual life.

Though this conclusion dawns on us with the force of revelation, it is fundamental in the philosophy of Śaṅkara as embodied in his commentary on the Gīta. It is indeed a radical error of interpretation not to see in his philosophy a powerful vindication of the importance of Bhakti.

# *The Place of Reason in Advaita*

## I

### INTRODUCTION

There is a necessity to form a correct idea of the position of reason in *Advaita Vedanta* as there are conflicting opinions on this question. It is often claimed that Advaita constitutes the culmination of the development of philosophic reason in India and that one of the principal sources of its attraction to the modern mind is its power of logic. At the same time there are writers who commend the School on the ground that it affords the highest satisfaction to the mystical impulse and that it successfully and legitimately transcends the realm of mere logic. Among Indian writers there are some who adjudge Advaita as the only adequate and faithful exposition of the philosophy of the Upanishads, while the other Schools of Vedanta are held to be accommodations to popular Theism, Realism and Pluralism. In short, on grounds of orthodoxy, rationalism and mysticism the doctrine of Advaita is presented as the highest product of the philosophic genius of India. In view of this complex valuation it may not be unnecessary to examine the position accorded to reason in the School. A clear understanding of this position may add to the quality of our valuation of the system.

## II

### THE FUNDAMENTAL POSITION

As a preliminary step in this work of historical analysis, the fundamental metaphysical doctrine of the system may be briefly enunciated. According to the major writers of Advaita, Reality is one Absolute Spirit, timeless and infinite. It is Super-personal for personality implies limitation. It is not the God of Theism and God is at best the highest of the appearances of this Absolute principle. There is nothing ultimately real beside this,

and therefore the objective world of material substance set within the framework of time, space and causation is just a shadowy and insubstantial appearance of this infinite reality. The finite individual, the hard 'I' and 'thou' of popular thought, is one with the Absolute in its final essence ; its finitude, individuality and plurality are phenomenal encrustations that dissolve under philosophic scrutiny. The ultimately real is the pure spirit, without a trace of the objective, the Infinite one, without a second, with the illusions of matter and finitude burnt up. It is no 'substance', for it is free from adjectival determination it is no 'cause', for it transcends time, it is no 'agent', for it transcends change involved in all activity and it is no 'ego' for there is no non-ego counterposed to it and 'egohood' itself implies the incompatible union of the subject and object. The familiar categories of thought limit and pluralize and hence the infinite. One transcends them. Hence there is an inescapable negative element in all the characterizations of the Absolute, but the negation is of limiting determinations and is grounded in the realization of the integral abundance of the Absolute. Human language, at its best, can only figure it out feebly as Sat Chit-Ananda, as reality, as spirit and as perfection.

### III

#### THE UPANISHADS ON WAYS OF KNOWING

The tradition of the philosophical systems of India insists upon a clear formulation of the methods and ways of knowledge. A doctrine of reality unsupported by a sound doctrine of knowledge cannot be treated as established. As a preparation for metaphysics, there must be a theory of knowledge. Philosophy is an intellectual attempt to construe reality and the attempt must be self-conscious and critical. It, therefore, must analyse and examine the source and ways of knowledge. The conclusions based upon such an investigation of knowledge must serve as the secure basis for the investigation into reality. Advaita Vedanta follows this tradition. The Upanishads themselves take note of this philosophic necessity of being clear about methods of approach to reality and lay down that the 'Atman', the ultimate

principle, must be apprehended through Sravana, Manana and Nidi Dhyasana. Advaita acknowledges these three steps following the Upanishads. The first step stands for the assimilation of traditional knowledge as embodied in sacred texts from proper preceptors. 'Sravana', thus represents the element of authoritoreanism in Vedanta. 'Manana' stands for reason and reflection. This indicates the element of rationalism. 'Nidi Dhyasana' stands for meditation or contemplation on the truths received through 'Sravana' and established through 'Manana'. When these three steps have been properly taken and the seeker after knowledge perfects himself through them, he gains what is called 'Avagati' or 'Anubhava'. This means an immediate apprehension of the Absolute. 'Nidi Dhyasana' and 'Anubhava' represent what may be called the Mystical element in Vedanta. Thus, even on rough analysis, Vedanta contains authoritoreanism, rationalism and mysticism as methods of knowledge, all the three being organised into fruitful co-operation. We may also note that what is called Empiricism is not altogether absent. Manana, in the process of the reflective consideration of the contents of the scripture, must view them in relation to the facts of experience and thus an element of Empiricism is unavoidable. The 'Anubhava' in which the progress of the seeker culminates is itself an Experience, resolving all conflicts and uncertainties and marking the consummation of the quest after truth. This higher transcendental Empiricism is another name for Vedantic Mysticism. Thus Empiricism, in both its possible levels, is included in the approach to reality. The final intuitive discovery of the real is no mere 'discovery.' It is perfection itself. All evil is due to ignorance and error and the illumination that destroys all ignorance and error is the realisation of the Supreme purpose of life. It is the highest good for ultimately truth is perfection and perfection is truth. The identification of final knowledge with the *Summum Bonum* turns the philosophy of the Upanishads into a kind of transcendental pragmatism. Of course, utility is not the standard of truth, but nothing other than truth is the determinant of ultimate value. Thus a tentative statement can be made that

Vedanta in its conception of philosophical knowledge comprehends Authoritareanism, Rationalism, Empiricism, Mysticism and Pragmatism.

#### IV

#### WHY ADMIT THE SRUTI?

Such is the ground-plan of the thought of the Upanishads on the ways of knowing reality. It is inherited by Advaita Vedanta. But the system introduces to the inherited scheme many striking features and powerful additions through a process of rigorous re-thinking. Many substantial and far-reaching discussions are instituted. The Epistemology of Advaita ceases to be the simple and easy scheme of the Upanishads. It is transformed into a mighty structure of Dialectic.

One of the foremost questions that faced all the orthodox philosophers in India concerned the authority of the Vedic testimony. Among the orthodox, it is the Meemamsakas and Vedantins that were committed to a whole-hearted acceptance of the Vedas. Naturally Advaita in the hands of the pioneers seeks to vindicate itself on this question. Why should we accept the authority of the scripture? The Meemamsakas had faced the question in all thoroughness. They had urged many important considerations. The Vedas may be discarded if they simply echo the findings of the other ways of knowing. In that case they are simply superfluous. They can also be discarded if they contradict them. But if they impart information going beyond the findings of perception and reason, and if this information is non-contradictory of those findings, what reason is there for rejecting their evidential character? It is wrong to insist on corroboration of the scripture by the other means of knowledge, for dependence on such extrinsic validation implies a defective conception of truth. It would make truth adventitious to the nature of thought and to divorce thought and reality in that manner is to surrender finally all claim to knowledge. Further the Vedas proclaim the fundamental duties of mankind and a duty is such that it cannot be discovered by the modes of knowledge like perception and inference which are concerned with

facts and accomplished realities. What 'ought to be done' cannot be ascertained through ways of knowing confined to 'what is'. Hence acknowledgement of the authority of the scriptures is held to be logically necessary. All this is summed up in the famous dictum 'Aprāpte hi Sāstram Arthavat'. Excepting the contention that the affirmation of the Vedas relate only to 'duties' and not to 'facts', all the other arguments of the Meemamsaka philosophers are acceptable to Advaita. Sureswara sets forth the case for the scriptures with great force and clarity in his Naiskarmya-Siddhi (128).

He says :

“ अनादृत्य श्रुतिं मोहात् अतो बौद्धाः तमस्विनः ।

आपेदिरे निरात्मत्वं अनुमानैकचक्षुषः ।

न चानादरे कारणमस्ति ! यस्मात् सर्वत्रैव अनादरनिमित्तं प्रमाणस्य  
प्रमाणांतरप्रतिपन्नप्रति पादनं वा, विपरीतप्रतिपादनं वा, संशयित  
प्रतिपादनं वा, न वा प्रतिपादनमिति । न चैतेषामन्यदपि  
कारणमस्ति । ”

‘The Buddhists, covered with darkness, having disregarded the Sruti out of delusion, came to the conclusion that there is no Atman, guided, as they were, exclusively by inference.

But there is no valid reason for disregarding the Sruti. The deliverance of a mode of knowledge can be disregarded only under these four circumstances. (1) If it just repeats the deliverance of other sources of knowledge, (2) if it contradicts the testimony of them, (3) if it is equivocal and (4) if it is meaningless and thus conveys no information, it can be disregarded. But in the case of the Sruti not one of these invalidating circumstances is found’.

It is further urged that we accept the verdict of other sources of evidence like perception precisely on these very grounds. When a perceptual judgment is meaningful, unambiguous, is no mere recollection of another judgment and is free from conflict with other established pieces of information, it is accepted as true. There can be no other ground for such acceptance. When scripture also fulfils the same validating conditions, refusal to

assent to it can have no logical basis. It is a case of pseudo-rationalism. It is on these lines that the claim of scripture is built up.

## V

### SRUTI ALONE REVEALS BRAHMAN AND THE USEFULNESS OF REASON IN EXEGESIS

Śaṅkara is emphatic on the principle that knowledge concerning Brahman is to be acquired only through scripture. He often maintains that neither perception nor inference can reveal Brahman. It is Super-sensuous and therefore imperceptible and is not characterised by anything that could be taken as the ground for inference.

“यदुक्तं ‘परिनिष्पन्नत्वात् ब्रह्मणि प्रमाणान्तराणि सभ्यवेयुः’ इति,  
तदपि मनोरथमात्रम्। रूपाद्यभावाद्धि नायमर्थः प्रत्यक्षस्य गोचरः।  
लिङ्गाद्यभावाच्च नानुमानदीनाम्। अगममात्रसमधिगम्य एव  
त्वयमर्थः।”

(Br. Su. 2-1-3)

‘The view that Brahman being an accomplished entity is accessible to other means of knowing is merely wishful thinking. Brahman has no features like colour and form and therefore it is beyond perception. It has no inferential mark, etc., and therefore it is not open to inference, etc. Therefore this truth is ascertainable only through scripture’. (Br. Su. 2-1-3) This is one of the several passages in which the point of view is clearly recorded. The role of Sruti as the sole source of knowledge about the transcendent reality is not questioned by any important writer in the entire history of Advaita. This does not mean that reason is wholly discarded. Sruti itself needs interpretation. Its purpose has to be properly construed. In the determination of purport or Tatparya, the commentator must proceed on right lines. He must pay attention to all the clues of purport and base his interpretation on sound lines of interpretation. The Meemamsakas and Vedantins lay down these canons and adherence to these is certainly an exgetical employment of

reason. Among the clues to purport, there is one called 'Upapatti' meaning reason. In several Vedic passages themselves some rational and empirical grounds are adduced in support of the principles propounded. For instance, the famous "Tatvamasi" section of Chandogya argues that the world is non-different from Brahman on the analogy of clay, iron and gold and their products and the non-difference of the latter from their respective causes. The reasons employed by Sruti itself must be taken into consideration in discerning its purport.

(Virarana—235—236)

The Sruti itself contains a good deal of reason and the commentator ought to use that as demonstrative of its final import. Śaṅkara, in his Introduction to Brihadaranyaka Bhashya, points out that the usual arguments advanced in other Schools in support of the reality of the Atman have been borrowed from the Sruti itself. The Sruti is not bereft of reason and hence in doing justice to it one is compelled to take a logical and rationalistic course. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad according to Śaṅkara appeals primarily to reason in those chapters in which the dialogues and instructions of Yajnyavalkya are presented. They are Upapattiprādhana'. Hence an exposition of the Sruti is obliged to substantiate it in terms of reason. Thus while Sruti is the sole authority for the doctrine of Brahman, the exegesis on Sruti cannot afford to be indifferent to reason. Soundness of interpretation and fidelity to the texts are possible only through the employment of reason in construing them and in doing justice to the arguments they contain.

## VI

### A FURTHER NEED FOR REASON AND THE KIND OF REASON NEEDED

Śaṅkara formulates another important principle pertaining to reason. He concedes that 'Dharma' is to be wholly ascertained through Sruti. We need not discuss the significance and validity of this concession. Further, it is just a restatement of

the contention of purva-Meemamsa. But the case is different with Brahman. He says :

“न धर्मजिज्ञासायामिव श्रुत्यादय एव प्रमाणं ब्रह्मजिज्ञासायाम् ।  
किन्तु श्रुत्यादयः अनुभवादयश्च यथासम्भवमिह प्रमाणम्, अनुभवा-  
वसानत्वात् भूतवस्तुविषयत्वात् ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य । . . . ”

“सत्सु वेदान्तवाक्येषु . . . तदर्थग्रहणदाढ्याय अनुमानमपि वेदान्त-  
वाक्याविरोधि प्रमाणं भवन्न निवार्यते, श्रुत्यैव च सहायत्वेन  
तर्कस्याभ्युपेतत्वात् । तथाहि—‘श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यः इति श्रुतिः ।”

(Br. Su. 1-1-2)

The import of this passage may be set down thus : In the determination of Dharma the scripture is the sole authority. The position is some-what altered in relation to Brahman. Brahman is an accomplished entity and not something to be brought into being like Dharma. The knowledge of Brahman must culminate in ‘Anubhava’ or immediate experience. As a result of this nature of Brahman and the nature of knowledge concerning it, as supplementary to scripture, experience and reason, not contradicting it, are also to be considered as ‘pramana’ in this matter. The Sruti itself admits reason as an aid in the text ‘Srotavyo Mantavyah’.

This is a very significant passage. It seems to accord to experience and reason a role that somewhat modifies the *Prima facie* authoritoreanism of Advaita. It also strictly conforms to the scheme of spiritual progress towards enlightenment outlined in the Upanishads.

But it is essential to take note of the limitation governing this admission of reason. Precisely on the strength of this admission a critic is made to argue that reason as an independent means of knowledge must be acknowledged in Vedanta. (Br. Su. 2-1-3) — In answer to him Śaṅkara makes a distinction between ‘Srutyanugriheeta Tarka’ ‘Kevala Tarka’. He maintains that the reason admitted is of the former variety. The whole passage is valuable :

“यदपि श्रवणव्यतिरेकेण मननं विदच्छब्द एव तर्कमप्यादत्तव्यं  
दर्शयतीति नानेन मिषेण शुष्कतर्कस्य आत्मलाभः संभवति ।  
श्रुत्यनुगृहीत एव तत्र तर्कः अनुभवाङ्गत्वेन आश्रीयते ‘स्वप्नान्त-

बुद्धान्तयोरुभयोरव्यभिचारादात्मनोऽनन्वागतत्वम्, संप्रसादे प्रपञ्च-  
परित्यागेन सदात्मना संपत्तेः निष्प्रपञ्चसदात्मत्वम्, प्रपञ्चस्य ब्रह्म-  
प्रभवत्वात् कार्यकारणान्यत्वन्यायेन ब्रह्माव्यतिरेकः ' इत्येवंजाती-  
यकः । ' तर्कप्रतिष्ठानात् ' इति केवलस्य तर्कस्य विप्रलम्भकत्वं  
दर्शयति । ”

‘The contention that scripture enjoining reason independent of scripture commends reason also, cannot be maintained. By such pretext dry reasoning cannot be made to acquire a status in Vedanta. It is only reason subservient to Sruti that is adopted here as instrumental to bringing about the experience of Vedantic truth. Such reasoning is illustrated in the following arguments : (a) The Atman abides through waking and dream as the unvarying witness and therefore it really transcends them in its essential nature. (b) In the state of deep sleep it dissociates itself from the world and merges into pure Being. Therefore its ultimate nature must consist of this Acosmic Being. (c) The world originates in Brahman and in accordance with the logic of causation that demonstrates the non-difference of the effect from the cause, the world is nothing apart from Brahman. The Sutra (2-1-11) points out the delusive character of mere (Kevala) reasoning’.

The reasonings in favour of the Atman’s purity, transcendence, acosmic character and its oneness with the fundamental Being are good instances of reason favoured by scripture. So is the argument demonstrating the unreality of the world, as effect, apart from Brahman, the cause. Reason functioning on its own foundations and not harnessed to the service of the Sruti, is discarded in decisive terms. It is perhaps this favoured type of reasoning that the commentary on Gaudapada’s Karikas mentions as capable of establishing Advaita. It is asserted there that *reason also* can prove the truth of Advaita and that the latter does not depend merely on scriptural evidence. Sankara does not seem to distinguish between Yukti and Anumana. But the author of Panchapadikā Vivarana does distinguish them. The distinction contributes substantially. It clarifies the notion of reason that is admitted in Vedanta.

Yukti according to him yields *probable* conclusions, which offer support to propositions independently declared by Sruti. Yukti by itself cannot prove anything. It has only the value of a supplement re-inforcing the affirmations of scripture. Anumana, on the other hand, can stand by itself and yields conclusions characterised by logical *necessity* (218-219).

Prakasatman subsumes all the Theistic proofs of God, worked out by the Yoga, Nyaya and Vaiseshika systems, under this inconclusive and essentially accessory type of ratiocination. Therefore, what Vedanta rejects is Anumana and what it utilizes in plenty is Yukti. The two senses of reason are important and we see the nature of reason appropriated by Advaita. Vachaspati Misra also defines Manana admitted in Vedanta in almost the same terms :

“ शब्दाविरोधिः, तदुपजोविः च युत्या विवेचनं मननम् ”

Manana is the reflective consideration through reason that is not in conflict with Sruti and is dependent on it.’(128-Bhamati)

Let us take stock of the situation. Reason is necessary for sound exegesis, it is called for in elucidation of the reasons embedded in the Sruti itself and in its dependent and accessory form it performs a vital service in promoting the comprehension of Vedanta.

## VII

### THE THEORY OF TWO REALMS OF TRUTH

We shall now turn to reason as an independent source of knowledge. In Indian logic reason is never purely deductive. In stating the major premise in the udaharana of the Indian Syllogism care is taken to include its inductive basis also. Thus an empirical element is integral to reason. The principal syllogistic fallacies include the material fallacies also so that errors of fact as well as errors of formal inconsistency are taken into account. Therefore while treating of reason there is no ground for confining attention only to the reason of the formal and deductive procedure of western Rationalism and formal

logic. By reason we have to understand reason in its deductive inductive form incorporating in itself elements of empirical investigation. Both Anumana and Pratyaksha constitute in a broad sense this extra-scriptural approach to reality. Reason grounded in facts of observation is the type whose status from the standpoint of Advaita is to be determined now. Thus both statements about perception and about inference in Advaitic works are relevant to this discussion. In fact all the methods of knowing other than Sabda can be treated as one inclusive procedure and named reason for the sake of convenient reference. The present problem is to ascertain the view of Advaita on the status of this way of knowing.

There is one conspicuous and seemingly workable solution which appears throughout the evolution of Advaitic thought. It may be named the theory of 'two Realms.' It is contended that scripture pertains to the realm of transcendent reality and reason and experience in the ordinary sense are vehicles of empirical truth. There is no conflict between the two and when there is an apparent conflict it is due to some trespass and the trespassing pramana should be set aside or explained away in some way. Sankara lays down that all the pramanas enjoy competence in their respective jurisdictions.

“स्वविषय शूराणिहि प्रमाणानि श्रोत्रादिवत्”

He adduces the analogy of the senses. Just as the organ of hearing enjoys sovereignty in the kingdom of sounds and seeks no confirmation and fears no contradiction from the organ of sight sovereign in the realm of colour, even so Sruti is beyond the other pramanas (Bri. page 743). While commenting on the passage of Katha Upanishad

“नेषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया”

he maintains that Vedantic knowledge cannot be acquired through reason and cannot be refuted by it also. Reason cannot refute it for it does not fall within the sphere of reason.

“अनुमानस्यैव अविषयत्वात् कुतः अनुमानविरोधः ?”

(Br. 743). Further illustrations of this attitude are unnecessary

as it is so well known. But a statement to the same effect from Sureshwara may be adduced :

“ प्रमाणानां सत्तां विरोधः, श्रोत्रादीनामिव भिन्नविषयत्वात् : (Nai. 157)

When two pramanas are adopted in the right manner there is no possibility of conflict between them and there is no necessity of concordance either, for every pramana and in fact every unit of thought is valid by itself without any extrinsic correspondence. Thus Sruti and empirical thought are set at harmony by a clear demarcation of their spheres of application.

It is extraordinary that this solution through separation of fields of operation could have appeared satisfactory. Śaṅkara brings forward the analogy of space (Akāśa) and colours. Perception reveals diversity of colours but still the unity of space is not thereby falsified. In the same way scripture affirms the unity of Brahman and the diversities disclosed to Empirical understanding cannot stultify that transcendent unity. (Bri. 743)—The analogy does not just suit the case. Space is not the same as colour and the unity of the one remains undamaged by the plurality of the other. But Brahman is infinite and it constitutes the essential being of all that exists. Its utter unity, because of its all-constituting nature, does stand opposed to every possible kind of diversity. Between two finite categories the required kind of separation is possible. But if one is all-encompassing and the other a finite category, the unity of the former does stultify the plurality of the latter. Further, in the final philosophic vision of reality the plurality of the empirical world is not taken up as real along with the unity disclosed by scripture. It stands sublated and unqualified unity is what remains as ontologically ultimate. So of the two realms of truth set up in harmonious separation, the empirical realm does ultimately dissolve leaving the transcendent scriptural realm as the sole truth. The hypothesis of the separation of the realms of truth is provisional. The scope of the Sruti claiming to set forth the Absolute is too great and inclusive not to involve the destruction of the world of Empirical truth.

## VIII

## EVIDENTIAL INFERIORITY OF REASON

Thus conflict between Sruti and Empirical thought is inevitable in the long run and the Advaitic thinkers are not slow in responding to the challenge of the situation. A new line of thought is evolved, definitely going beyond the Meemamsaka level in which harmony was sought by a bifurcation of realms of knowledge. The assertion is advanced that in case of such conflict scripture possesses greater force of truth and Empirical thought, however valid for practical purposes, stands invalidated philosophically. Vachaspati Misra embodies this principle of valuation in his oft-quoted proposition :

“ तात्पर्यवती श्रुतिः प्रत्यक्षात् बलवती ”

Purportful Sruti has greater truth than perception. (Radhakrishnan II Vol. 518).

(Bhamati IX)

Prakasatman argues that in case of conflict between two independent sources of knowledge there is no solution except by setting aside one as originating in some mistake. That which has a habitual liability to mistake must be discarded and that which has no such liability must be accepted as valid. What could be of some use even without being considered revelatory of final truth, must be held inferior in logical value to that which can serve no purpose if it is not admitted as the revelation of the highest truth. By these two tests, namely, habitual liability of error and possibility of use even without being finally true, empirical thought loses its claims when it is contradictory of the scriptures.

“ निरपेक्षज्ञानयोरपि परस्परविरुद्धयोः अन्यतरस्य कारणदोषसंभावनया बाधो निरूप्यते। तत्र अद्वितीयप्रत्यगात्मप्रतिपत्तेः आत्मनि द्वैतप्रत्यक्षस्य च विरोधे द्वैतावभासस्य देहात्मप्रत्ययवत् दुष्टकारणजन्यत्वं कल्प्यते, शब्दस्य स्वयंदोषरहितत्वात्, द्वैतावभासहेतूनां चक्षुरादीनां संभावितदोषत्वात्। .... द्वैतावभासस्य स्वप्रवदोषजन्यत्वेऽपि व्यवहाराविसवादात् प्रामाण्यलाभात्, शब्दे तु

पुनर्दोषकल्पनायां व्यवहारातीतविषयत्वात्, दोषजन्यत्वात्  
तत्त्वात् प्रच्युतेः उभयविद्यमपि प्रामाण्यं न स्यात् । ”

(Vivarana-243).

But the writer who works out this line of argument in a radical and systematic style is certainly Sarvajñatma Muni. He frees it from all confusing complications and from dependence on uncertain assumptions. He gives it a bold and dialectically formidable shape. The entire argument is contained in the second chapter of Sankshepa Sareeraka. The details may be overlooked and the author's restatement with approval of older points of view is also to be passed over.

(a) When there is conflict between observation and inference, the former is considered as superior in evidential value on account of its immediacy. Reason is mediate and indirect. Extending the same principle, we have to attach greater logical value to scripture as it is revelatory of Atman more immediate than the facts open to observation. Observation depending on the senses, external and internal, is not wholly free from mediation. But the Atman is self-luminous and knowledge concerning it has the utmost directness. If immediate apprehension can cancel mediate cognition, as is implied in the empirical exaltation of perception over inference, then surely scripture revealing the Atman can annul the evidence of perception and other means of knowledge in case of conflict with them.

(S.S. II 123).

(b) Sarvajñatman propounds another criticism of all ways of knowledge other than scripture. He evidently attaches great significance to it. He takes his stand on a familiar definition of true apprehension. That apprehension is true by which something unapprehended before comes to be apprehended. Novelty is a fundamental characteristic of valid cognition. To be sure of novelty, we must be convinced of the fact of ignorance about the object of cognition prior to its being cognized. That means that *there must be some awareness of the object as uncognized preceding the act of cognition* and only then can the cognition in question possess novelty. The prior awareness of *unknownness*

is a necessary implication of the appreciation of the novelty of knowledge. Prior *unknownness* cannot be just inferred on the basis of novelty, for the very novelty *cannot be noted* in the absence of an awareness of that prior unknownness. Knowledge removes the unknownness and hence cannot itself be the source of the awareness of unknownness. In other words only an object, awareness concerning which is irrepressible whether we know it or not, can constitute an object of right apprehension. The only entity whose presence to awareness is irrepressible is the Atman and everything else, every entity that is a non-self, sails into our awareness, as it were, through our cognition of it. What we cannot help being aware of, though we do not understand it, is the eternally self-intimating Atman. It alone maintains its presence in our consciousness in spite of our utmost ignorance of it, for it constitutes the very substance of that consciousness. So only apprehension of the Atman can fulfil the test of truth, for the Atman shines irrepressibly through the darkness of ignorance. We may be ignorant of non-selves but we cannot be aware of them as unknown and challenging our comprehension. Novelty in apprehension is possible only with regard to Atman for it manifests itself as unknown in the prior state of ignorance. So all acts of cognition directed to the non-self fail to conform to the test of truth, Sruti revealing what manifests itself as unknown before eminently satisfies the criterion of novelty. (Sam. Sar. II 7-21). This circumstance condemns all other ways of knowing as falling short of the standard of truth and scripture alone survives the critique of knowledge. So scripture can sublate and annul empirical thought.

The criticism is subtle and daring. It is founded upon a valuable definition of knowledge and appropriates to great advantage the concept of the 'selfluminous' nature of the Atman. It is fore-shadowed by Sureswara but its final and striking form is due to Sarvajnatma Muni. Its total aim is the demonstration of the evidential weakness of all means of knowledge other than scripture. Conflicts between scripture and the other means of knowledge must be naturally resolved in favour of the former.

## IX

## REASON CONFIRMS SRUTI

So far we have concerned ourselves with the contribution of Sankara and his ardent followers towards the solution of the problem. The problem, it may be repeated, is that of estimating the significance of empirical thought in the context of its opposition to scripture. There is another line of thought emanating from Mandana Mishra, probably a contemporary of Sankara, who along with the latter built up the solid structure of Advaita. There are differences between the two pioneers in details. But in the fundamentals of philosophy concerning Brahman, the individual self, nature and the ideal of salvation there is essential affinity of outlook. Mandana shares with Sankara the problem of resolving the contradiction between scripture and empirical thought. He does not subscribe to the theory of two realms of truth : nor does he endeavour to undermine empirical thought in the drastic manner of Sarvajnatman. He strikes a new path and it may be styled the theory of corroboration. He bequeathed such a strong dialectical weapon, that it found entry into the works of all the subsequent writers such as Sarvajnatman, Prakasatman, Vimuktatman, Anand Bodha, Vachaspati, Sri Harsha and Chitsukha. He undertakes an analysis of the concept of difference and examines whether empirical thought either in its perceptual or inferential levels is committed to the reality of difference. His finding is negative and he urges in consequence that reason by itself pursued resolutely demolishes pluralism and dualism and vindicates the infallibility of the scriptural declaration of Monism. Thus for him reason corroborates the scripture.

The bulk of his thought on this question is presented in the Second Chapter of his great work, *Brahma Siddi*. His dialectical procedure may be indicated in brief outline :

(a) The nature of difference does not admit of clear definition and thus bears the character of an illusion. Application of logic to the elucidation of the concept reveals its self-contradictory and illusory nature. Is difference the very substance of

an entity or an attribute inhering in it? It cannot be the former for difference is relative to other entities from which the entity differs while the substance is non-relative and is presupposed by all comparisons and contrasts of it with others. It cannot be an attribute for admission of difference between substance and attribute is implied in identifying difference as only an attribute. To postulate another difference thus to account for difference is to land in infinite regress. Difference can neither be a substantive nor an adjective.

(b) Perception is the foundation of all empirical knowledge and perception cannot be the source of our apprehension of difference. Difference cannot be apprehended in the initial instant of perception for its apprehension presupposes the apprehension of what differs. It is negative in nature as it determines an object from other objects. But negation is relative to some being and that being must be grasped in its positive essence before we could grasp what beings it negates. So the apprehension of difference should be assigned to a stage of perception other than the initial one. But perception loses its perceptual character as we emerge out of its first stage. It becomes recognition and contains admixture of elements not drawn from perception itself. If difference as characterizing the entity perceived in the first instant is perceived in latter instants, that difference is just a subjective construction or imaginative supplementation superadded to the pure being grasped in the first instant. Difference is thus seen to be a creature of subjective imposition on the differenceless essence intuited in the pure and thoroughly objective phase of apprehension. It is want of inquiry that has created the impression that our perceptual experience presents a world of differences.

(c) There is a logical see-saw involved in any account of the cognition of difference. The knowledge of difference between A and B proceeds from a prior awareness of A and B with all their differentiating characteristics. Otherwise no idea of their difference could ever arise. But this prior awareness of A and B not as one but as two with their differentiating characteristics already presupposes an apprehension of difference. How could

they be treated as two without their difference being cognized ? To put the same argument in the words of a later summary :

“प्रत्यक्षेण भेदग्रहणे भेदस्य धर्मिप्रतियोगित्वव्यवस्थापेक्षत्वात्, तद्व्यवस्थायाश्च भेदापेक्षत्वात् इतरेतराश्रयत्वम् ॥”

(Vivarana 286)

To cognize difference of an object we must be aware of it and its counterobjects. But the awareness of an object and its counter-objects as standing in such relation must be founded on an understanding of their difference.

The argument is unfolded at great length and with much subtlety. What is of importance for the present discussion is its place in the epistemological valuation of empirical thought. The point of the argument is evident and every later version of it is aimed at the same end. Perception and reason do not support pluralism. On the contrary a sound analysis of them would bring out that they support a conception of reality devoid of all differentiation and diversity. Empirical thought itself, when rigorously critical, is obliged to affirm the ultimate unity of the real. The pluralistic error is demolished by the other means of knowledge also and thus Sruti gets nothing but confirmation from their verdict. Perception and inference need not be confined to another order of truth and need not be judged inferior to scripture in truth-value. They re-affirm and reinforce the Vedantic deliverance of scripture. Such is the mode of harmonization in knowledge that Mandana Misra worked out.

## X

### REASON IS SELF-CONTRADICTORY

Before proceeding to the next mode of reckoning with the issue, it may be remarked that no writer exclusively adheres to one way of treating it. For instance we find in Sarvajnatman the thesis of two realms of truth, the theory of Mandana and also the conception of the logical weakness of empirical knowledge. In Vachaspati and Prakasatman also we find all the three solutions. So without ascribing any one solution to any

one writers, we can easily distinguish them and assign each to its most thorough exponent. The drift is common and all of them seek to maintain the doctrine of Sruti understood as constituting an unqualified Idealistic Monism. To offer a separate realm of application to empirical knowledge, to lower its validity or to discern in it a powerful re-affirmation of the teaching of the Sruti are different dialectical expedients calculated to achieve the same result. Sri Harsha, the author of Khandana Khanda Khadya, is the author of another line of attack. He is the master-dialectician of the School. He shares with the Buddhistic dialecticians like Dignaga and Dharmakirti philosophical hostility to Nyaya-Vaisesika. He openly acknowledges affinity with the dialectical system of Sunya-vada though he ascribes to it total Nihilism in consonance with the general Hindu understanding of that system. Such a view of Sunya-vada makes it necessary for him to point out wherein Vedanta differs from Sunyavada. He writes :

“ एवं च सति सौगतब्रह्मवादिनोरयं विशेषः, यत्-आदिमः सर्वमेवा-  
निर्वचनीयं वर्णयति, विज्ञानव्यतिरिक्तं पुनरिदं विश्वं सदसद्भावविलक्षणं  
ब्रह्मवादिनः सङ्गिरन्ते । ”

(76)

‘ This is the difference between the Buddhists and the Vedantins. The former explain everything as indefinable. The Vedantins treat the whole universe other than consciousness as other than either existent or non-existent ’ (p. 76). This is a clear enough distinction when one notes that Sri Harsha is speaking of Sunya-vada. He says further :

“ वस्तुतस्तु वयं सर्वप्रपञ्चसत्त्वासत्त्वव्यवस्थापनविनिवृत्ताः स्वतःसिद्धै  
चिदात्मनि ब्रह्मतत्त्वे केवले भ्रमबलम्ब्य चरितार्थाः सुखमास्महे । ”

(79)

‘ In reality we, having withdrawn from the establishment of the reality and unreality of entire world and resting our burden on Brahman, the self-established, the atman of the essence of consciousness and the pure and transcendent principle, remain blessed and happy ’ (p. 79).

The question naturally arises as to what establishes the reality of Brahman. Our author raises the question :

“ ननु अद्वैते किं प्रमाणम् ? ”

‘ But what is the proof for Advaita ? ’ (82) He enters into a long controversy trying to show the logical contradictions involved in the question itself. He finally consents to answer and says that Sruti is the pramana.

“ श्रुतिरेव अद्वैते प्रमाणमिति ब्रूमः । ”

(82) But the answer is only from the empirical standpoint and from the ultimate point of view Brahman, the non-dual principle, is self-established.

“ श्रुतिः तस्मिन् अविद्यादशायां पराभ्युपगमरीत्या प्रमाणमित्युच्यते ! ”

“ वस्तुतस्तु स्वत्मसिद्धमेव चिद्रूपम् । ” (61-62)

Thus self-evidence and Sruti are held as the sources of certitude with regard to the ultimate truth. Of the two Sruti is an empirical rendering of the Advaitic truth which is self-established. The self-intuition of the Atman takes the form of the Sruti in the empirical plane. Sruti is the empirical manifestation of the transcendent self-effulgence of the Atman.

“ आपाततो यदिदमद्वयवादिनीनाम् अद्वैतमाकलितमर्थतया श्रुतीनाम् ।

तत् स्वप्रकाशपरमार्थचिदेव भूत्वा निष्पीडितादहह निर्वहते विचारात् ॥ ” (136)

All this is in the high tradition of Advaita.

With this background we have to take Sri Harsha's consideration of other pramanas. His attitude is arresting and revolutionary. It would have appeared more revolutionary but for its obvious indebtedness to Buddhistic dialectics. He declares war on all the realistic Schools of thought and particularly Nyaya-vaisheshika. Following Mandana he refutes the tenability of the concept of difference. He subjects the fundamental logical and metaphysical principles of Nyaya-vaisheshika to a thorough examination. Nothing is invulnerable, not even the notions of truth and error. The definitions of all the pramanas including Sabda are exhibited as self-contradictory and confused. The

main categories of metaphysics like substance, attribute, cause, motion. Sāmānya, Vishesha, Samavāya and Abhāva are analysed and demonstrated to be constructions lacking in clarity and consistency. Nothing remains except the conclusion that all is indefinable and inexplicable and that is another way of saying that the whole machinery of thought and things is unreal and illusory. No wonder Sri Harsha calls his work 'Anirvachaneeya Sarvasva'. The dialectical performance is exciting and the achievement is solid. That is the reason why celebrated writers in later ages like Chitsukha fell victims to the charm of this destructive logic and adopted the whole of it in their works.

One must note in passing the limitation of this polemics. It is certainly less in range than that of Śaṅkara in Sutra Bhashya. It concentrates its attacks on Nyaya-vaisheshika. The possibility remains of other realistic and pluralistic systems retaining validity in their specific aspects. But Sri Harsha seems to have imagined that the refutation of Nyaya-vaisheshika contains a refutation of the whole of realistic and pluralistic thought. He does not also come to grips with the Yogachara.

But is all this criticism attacking the very notion of prama or truth itself sound? Does not criticism imply a standard or criterion of logical valuation? By admitting such a criterion is not the dialectician committing himself to a principle other than his Sruti and self-established Atman? Can he evade the task of defining and explaining his principle? If he enters this constructive phase, is he not restricting the sweeping claims of his destructive criticism? If he evades the task is he not abandoning all standards of criticism thereby damaging his ambitious conclusions? The standard ought to be discerned by reason. *Hence not all reason stands condemned if logical condemnation of any system of philosophy is possible.* Destruction implies a positive basis and the admission of such a basis involves the philosopher in the labour of defence in addition to the heroism of offence. Sri Harsha has ready answers to such objections. He maintains, he says, no position of his own and simply works out the dialectical destruction of the opposite systems of thought

by employing their own premises and principles. He describes his procedure briefly in the following words :

“येतु स्वपरिकल्पितसाधनदूषणव्यवस्थाया विचारमवतार्य तत्त्वं निर्णेतुमिच्छन्ति तान् प्रति ब्रूमः न साध्वीयं भवतां विचारव्यवस्था, भवत्कल्पितव्यवस्थयैव व्याहतत्वात् । अत एव अस्मदुपन्यस्यमान-दूषणस्थितिर्विषयाः पर्यनुयोगाः निरवकाशाः । त्वद्वयवस्थयैव त्वद्वयवस्थायाः व्याहन्त्युपन्यासात् । ” (79-80)

‘There are some thinkers who set up a methodological framework for purposes of philosophical construction and criticism and desire to discover reality in accordance with it. We say to them ‘your manner of inquiry is not right. It is in contradiction with the methodological system you have yourself built up. It is for this reason that there is no place for any counter-criticism of us in respect of our criticism. We simply exhibit the contradiction of your system with itself’. (79-80)

Sri Harsha means that he simply draws out the inner contradictions of the opposed system of thought and propounds no principles of his own in the context. His dialectic consists in showing how the system collides with itself under scrutiny and thus stands self-destroyed. Nothing positive and new is advanced as a basis of criticism and it is criticism wholly without any construction. The law of contradiction works out the self-annihilation of the system criticised.

This is Sri Harsha’s novel way of treating reason inclusive of empirical knowledge. He does not allot to it separate realm of truth. Nor does he condemn it as weaker when in opposition to scripture. He does not also count upon it for corroboration in a direct and positive manner. He allows it to unfold itself and work out all its possibilities. Such a development reveals its inner discords and radical inconsistencies. Reason sinks under its own weight and perishes through lack of internal coherence. Such a suicide of reason leaves the field of truth wholly in the possession of Vedanta, the self-established Atman manifesting itself through Sruti. Reason promotes Vedanta by this self-enforced exit. The problem of resolving the contradic-

tion between Srutis and reason is eliminated because reason cannot eliminate the contradictions within itself. Dialectic accomplishes this negative vindication of Vedanta. Sri Harsha is a solitary figure in the history of Advaita. No other writer revels in so much of destructive dialectic. Even those who adopt his contribution like Chitsukha add to them a great deal of constructive matter in their final philosophical statement. Subsequent Advaitins of considerable repute are not wanting who are dissatisfied with such a negative position and offer a positive account of pramanas. Dharma.Rajadhwari is one such instance.

There is reason enough for such dissatisfaction. Indian tradition is on the whole unsympathetic to Vitanda, a purely destructive argumentation. Sri Harsha's escape from constructive commitment is hardly successful. To condemn a system of thought on the ground of its own inner contradictions does itself entail on the part of the critic the admission of the law of contradiction. That much of commitment is enough to involve one in a whole theory of knowledge. Sri Harsha further complicates his position by acknowledging the doctrine of the 'self-luminosity' or the self-certifying character of consciousness. That doctrine contains within itself a complete system of epistemology and metaphysics. Chitsukha uses it as the root-principle of his version of Vedanta. Perhaps so positive and stupendous a system of thought as Advaita cannot be erected on the foundations of mere negative dialectics.

## XI

### RESUME AND COMMENTS

It is necessary to bring together the principal conceptions on the question in a connected perspective and see how far they go in effecting a satisfactory solution. Sureswara's defence of Sruti is a valuable land-mark and Sruti cannot be simply brushed aside when it fulfils the tests of novelty, intelligibility and non-contradiction. Śaṅkara himself has supplied the ground for such a defence and particularly in his statement that each pramana is paramount in its own sphere. Śaṅkara's

distinction between the affirmation of Brahman and the promulgation of Dharma is significant. Knowledge of Brahman must culminate in 'experience' and for that purpose a utilization of reason and empirical knowledge it called for. Sravana is not all and it must be supplemented by Manana if what is learnt by Sravana is to issue in 'Anubhava'. In this single argument Śāṅkara does joint justice, as it were, to authority, reason, Empiricism and Mysticism. Interpretation of scripture does involve exercise of reason for exegesis must be logical and the reasoning embodied in the scripture itself must be explicated. Supplementary argumentation as illustrated in the analysis of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep and the consideration of the ontological status of the effect in relation to the cause must also be undertaken for converting received knowledge into personal conviction and immediate apprehension Prakasatman is right in distinguishing between Yukti and Anumana. He is amplifying Śāṅkara's distinction between 'Srutyānugrihita Tarka' and 'Kevala Tarka'. It is the former that is commended and the employment of the latter would jeopardize the autonomous validity of the several pramanas.

Passing on to the estimate of independent reason at the hands of the Advaitic thinkers, we encounter difficulties. The reconciliation of Sruti and other means of knowledge by a bifurcation of the realm of truth is a provisional expedient and cannot be a final settlement of the issue. The very absoluteness of the claim of Sruti renders that an unstable equilibrium. The evidential inferiority of reason and empirical knowledge in comparison to Sruti variously propounded by Vachaspati, Prakasatman and Sarvajnatman is no easy matter. As is explicit Sarvajnatman takes his stand on a particular definition of true apprehension, taken over from the Meemamsakas and combines it with the theory of the irrepressible self-luminosity of the Atman and produces his specific charge against all pramanas other than Sruti. But the conception of truth is itself a contribution of philosophic reason. As Sruti itself is a mode of knowledge subjected to critical valuation, the principle of criticism by which it is judged to be superior in evidential force must be derived from a different source of knowledge. A total depreci-

ation of all other means of knowledge would obliterate all such standards of judgment and thus the superiority of Sruti can no more be substantiated. Sruti cannot be extolled if a principle not derived from Sruti is not there by the application of which it could be extolled. Mandana Misra's critique of difference is no doubt penetrating and puts the case for Advaita on a thoroughly extra-scriptural basis also. But the idea of confirming Sruti by reason modifies the epistemological plan of Advaita greatly. In the first place the theory of 'Svatahpramanya' admitted by Vedanta implies an indifference to such confirmation. If independent rationalistic confirmation of Sruti is regarded necessary that theory has to be abandoned. If, in the second place, the main principles of Advaita are capable of being supported purely by reason, the case for asserting the authority of Sruti is weakened substantially. Sruti is held authoritative on the ground that it imparts knowledge not accessible through other ways of knowing. If a free pursuit of truth through reason takes us to the doctrine of Advaita, reliance on scripture is a superfluous piece of orthodoxy. The position of Mandana involves too drastic an alteration in the Advaitic theory of knowledge. Either Sruti communicates some knowledge not attainable through reason, in which case a complete confirmation of it by reason ought not to be possible or Sruti as an independent source of philosophical knowledge is in-admissible. Mandana's solution ends with a problem. We have already noted the distinctiveness and implications of Sri Harsha's attitude to reason. He attempts to break logic through the instrumentality of logic itself and disclaims all logical commitment. It is no tenable standpoint in the long run. A positive metaphysic such as Advaita cannot issue out of a negation of all logic. A dialectical destruction of Realism and pluralism by their own weapons may be an attractive game to contemplate. But it does not even begin except when engineered by a 'Metaphysical criterion' not open to such destruction. Error cannot perish except in the fire of truth.

We may conclude with a consideration of great importance. Śaṅkara with all his reverence for scripture and rejection of

mere reason does not hesitate to appropriate reason in all its thoroughness. He defends in terms of reason the Vedantic position in all his writings. Particularly the Second Chapter of his elucidation of the Vedanta Sūtras employs reason for purposes of defence and also for demonstrating the weakness of other Schools of thought. This practice of the philosopher signifies his acceptance of reason as an indispensable instrument of truth. His writings and polemics reveal another aspect of his philosophical personality. There is a triumphant conviction running through them all that *reason in the service of Sruti is greater as reason* than the uncertain constructions of irresponsible rationalism not guided and illumined by the wisdom of the Upanishads. No rival philosophical system is repudiated just on the ground that it rejects Sruti. It is also not silenced merely with a hoary quotation. It is convicted of error, logical and philosophical. Anti-Vedic Schools are for him expressions of weak logic. The logic of vedanta is invincible for him for its very subordination to Sruti fills it with immense power and irresistible force. The demonstration of the Superior intellectual vitality and philosophic depth of Vedanta inspired by Sruti over Schools founded on mere logic and experience was undoubtedly a part of the mission of Śaṅkara. The light of reason, according to him, burns brighter in the sanctuary of the Sruti than anywhere else.

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## *The Cardinal Principle of The Visistadvaita of Ramanuja*

Ramanuja, a philosopher and saint, flourished in South India in the eleventh century and propounded a school of Vedanta that has come to be known as VISISTADVAITA. As a Vedantin he founded his thought on the teachings of the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras and Bhagavadgita. The Central concept of Vedanta is 'Brahman' and as such his entire system of philosophy is devoted to the exposition of that principle. His special mode of interpreting that principle is conveyed by the term 'Visistadvaita'. Like the other teachers of Vedanta, Ramanuja also develops a doctrine of Sadhana, a complete scheme of practical philosophy designed to work out human perfection. As is natural this scheme is governed by his conception of ultimate Reality designated Brahman.

His metaphysics of Brahman starts with a critique of materialism. For him Nature is not a self-maintaining and self-explanatory order. It can furnish no account of the 'Selves' or the centres of consciousness whose reality is testified to by experience and thought in all their levels. If the metaphysical picture is widened and a dualistic Naturalism is formulated affirming the material realm of being and the realm of non-material Selves, though the outlook is somewhat more tenable being more comprehensive, we have still fundamental difficulties according to Ramanuja. A dualism of finites is no final satisfaction of the metaphysical impulse. The dynamism, order and coherence of nature and the laws governing the kingdom of finite spirits remain unexplained. No knowledge is complete which rests in the finite manifold. To account for it thought must ascend to something infinite, one and transcendent. The ground and explanation of the finite many, material and spiritual, must lie in a supreme Reality, which is at once above them and is their sustaining foundation. It must transcend

them for it is not itself a finite principle and must be immanent in them for they must be grounded in it. That Reality is Brahman.

This ascent to the category of Brahman is based on no absolute denial of the finite beings; nor does it concede to them absolute and self-dependent reality. They are dependent and derivative principles. To over-assert the reality of the finite is to divest it of its basis and intelligibility. To over-negate it as merely illusory is to attribute to the Supreme principle all the finitude implied in the liability to illusion. Hence Brahman is neither the God of Deism nor the Absolute of an illusionistic monism.

Brahman is the ultimate Being of which the cosmos of finite entities is a 'Mode', 'adjective' or 'body'. The final truth is concrete, organic and comprehensive, as it envisages the 'one' as appropriating the 'many' as part of its infinite actuality. The total metaphysical fact is inclusive and determinate.

Brahman is Absolute Spirit. For only as such it can transcend and account for the non-spiritual. It is perfect and self-fulfilled, for it transcends the finite selves and sustains them. It is infinite. Time, space, the exclusions of the empirical order and qualitative deficiencies, which are the principles of finitude do not condition it. It is 'Ananda', supreme perfection of conscious existence. The fundamental characterization of Brahman according to Ramanuja is that it is 'Satya-Jnana-Ananda-Nirmala-Anantha'. For Ramanuja to be spiritual is to be personal. Consciousness for him is the attribute of personality. Hence the ultimate principle is the supreme personality. Personality as such does not involve finitude, The implications of personality are only self-consciousness and self-identity. These are eternally and fully realised conditions in the Absolute. As such it is personal. Distinction from the non-self does not imply the autonomy and absoluteness of non-self. Therefore the self-distinction of the Supreme from the derivative reals does not amount to conferring on them a self-dependent status. They are modes of the supreme, distinguished no doubt,

but not discarded or alienated. They are distinct 'moments' within its complete expanse of being.

In his delineation of nature of the Brahman Ramanuja seeks to do justice to both its ultimacy and intimacy. Its metaphysical attributes are outlined and its religious aspect is also brought out. The Absolute is God. The Supreme object of metaphysical contemplation is also the final object of religious adoration. God is infinite and incomprehensible in His Majesty but is also the fountain of infinite love and compassion. The Upanishads do say that he is dearer than all. They attribute His creativity to the abundance of love. The knowledge of the Supreme Being cannot just remain knowledge. In knowing the infinite one attains plenitude of peace and the joy of self-perfection. Human love can find no object worthy of it except God. The metaphysical knowing of the Absolute and the religious love of the Deity must become one in their final phase of fullness. Thus there can be no tenable distinction between the Absolute and God and none whatever between apprehension and enjoyment. Such a distinction is the result of a double belittling of both the Absolute and God and of knowledge and love. Thus Ramanuja's conception of Brahman makes it one with the Supreme Deity of Vaishnavism, the God of love and beauty, the compassionate refuge and the final destination of the finite self.

From this philosophical doctrine, the plan of spiritual culture, formulated in Visistadvaita, naturally and inevitably follows. The goal of human endeavour must be communion with God. All affliction is due to the neglect of this supreme concern. This neglect is rendered possible by individual freedom which, as a necessary requisite of the spiritual self-development of the individual is provided and sustained by God. Freedom abused—the possibility of abuse is an implication of freedom—leads the individual to a peaceless career of evil and transmigrat-ion from life to life. The imperative is to turn away from this darkness and desolation and to undertake the journey to the peace and joy of God. There is true life, the life of liberation

and fullness of being, only in communion with the infinite Source of all value.

In conformity with the teachings of the Gita, Ramanuja, works out the plan of Sadhana. The first stage of endeavour is Karma-yoga. This is life of dedicated action. It involves all the duties of man comprising social and individuals morality. Selfless and God-centred action releases the inward resources of the spirit. Passion and inertia are overcome and the calm power of the spirit in man is aroused to activity. The second stage is marked by the exercise of this liberated inner energy, in the field of contemplation. This is Jnana-yoga. It is self-development, for contemplation is the proper excellence of the soul. It is also self-recovery, for only the developed soul can intuit itself as it is in its essential nature. This achievement of self-increase and self-understanding is the culmination of Jnana-yoga. But to comprehend the self is to realise vividly that its true destiny is God-realisation. The self is so constituted that it can fulfil itself in all the amplitude of its being only in God. Thus the true purpose, the proper objective, is engendered by self-intuition. This is the birth of Bhakti-yoga. Bhakti-yoga is seeking God with all one's heart and soul and strength. It is love and contemplation. It is meditation and worship. It is aided by moral virtues. It involves renunciation of unworthy ends. It is backed by the devout study of sacred wisdom and a reflective and critical assimilation of it. In essence it is an intense out-pouring of love in the steady practice of the presence of God. When this reaches maturity and fulness, the vision of God is graciously granted. The vision is a gift of Grace and the Grace is in answer to love absolute and unconditional. It marks the transition from the mundane to eternal life. The finite soul is awakened to the plenitude of its being.

In addition to the three phases of spiritual life indicated, Ramanuja posits another factor as essential in the pathway to God. It is self-surrender or prapatti. It is necessary as an element in all the other Yogas and it can itself be efficacious as an independent yoga also. It is necessary as making amends for one's deficiencies in the practice of the other means. When

one realises his total incompetence in all the other methods, it can be adopted as a self-sufficient means by itself. Prapatti means the surrendering of one's spiritual responsibilities wholly to God and making him the only means of one's good. The retention of human initiative restricts the divine power of redeeming, to the sphere of co-operation with and response to human initiative. But when the human initiative is surrendered wholly, the redeeming power of God is released in all its might and magnitude, and the salvation of the devotee is worked out unfailingly in accordance with the absolute demands of Divine love and grace. Prapatti is the technique of substituting the infinite power of the Supreme for the imperfect effort of the individual. It puts weakness itself into a constructive use and appropriates the Infinite itself as a means to the Infinite end. All that is required is a genuine self-oblation to God.

# *The Gita According to Ramanuja*

## I

While admitting that the *Gītā* was promulgated to rescue Arjuna from his agonizing mood of retreat from battle and to inspire him to heroism, Rāmānuja says that the occasion was used by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to present afresh the teachings of the Vedānta. On his analysis Arjuna possesses all the qualifications required for the grace of the preceptor and God. He is अस्थानस्नेहकारुण्यधर्माधर्मभियाकुल and प्रपन्न. It is to be noted that, unlike Suyodhana, Arjuna does not get into this anxiety out of fear or uncertainty about the issue of the war. His is a crisis of affection and his uncertainty concerns the righteousness of his cause. Hence he implores Śrī Kṛṣṇa to enlighten him and resolve the moral conflict oppressing him. Making him the 'vyāja', occasion, Śrī Kṛṣṇa brings down, as it were, to humanity at large this supreme scripture.

Rāmānuja sharply defines the theme of the teaching. It is स्वविषयं भक्तियोगम्. In other words it is *bhakti* directed to the 'supreme Being, incarnated as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is also enunciated that this *bhakti* is ज्ञानकर्मानुगृहीत. The substance of the teaching, therefore : is two-fold. It affirms the supreme Reality and inculcates devotion towards it.

In our attempt, to present Rāmānuja's interpretation, which has to be necessarily brief, these two constituents of the teaching are to receive justice. The first concerns the metaphysical thesis of the text and the second constitutes the formulation of the ideal pathway of life.

Anticipating the exposition, one might say, with Vedānta Deśika that all the commentators concur on this two-fold theme. Differences might arise in the specific articulation of the grand subject-matter, but the central direction of thought is universally admitted.

पिशाचरन्तिदेवगुप्तशङ्करयादवप्रकाशभास्करनारायणार्य-  
यज्ञस्वामिप्रभृतिभिः एवं स्वं मतमास्थितैः परश्शतैर्भाष्यकृद्भिः  
अस्मत्सिद्धान्ततीर्थकरैश्च भगवद्यामुनाचार्यभाष्यकारादिभि-  
रविगीतपरिगृहीतोऽयमत्र सारार्थः—भगवानेव परं तत्त्वम्,  
अनन्यशरणैर्यथाधिकारं तदेकाश्रयणं परमधर्मः—इति.

With the recognition of the commonly admitted core of the teaching of the *Gītā* as a fitting preamble, we may proceed to consider the metaphysical teachings of the *Gītā* according to Rāmanujā's interpretation.

## II

Nature or *Prakṛti* is pictured more or less as it came to be described by the Sāṃkhya system at a later philosophic epoch with some fundamental differences. The conception of the manifest physical universe as evolving out of a single primordial unmanifested material principle is there. This is adumbrated several times. The main stages of the formation of the physical universe such as *mahat* and *ahaṅkāra*, are mentioned even as they come to be elaborated later in Sāṃkhya. There is no hint of an atomic cosmology such as that of Buddhism, Jainism or Vaiśeṣika. The three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are clearly stated as characterizing *Prakṛti*. Their functions are specifically noted. A magnificent and many sided use is made of the *guṇas* in the ethical and spiritual prescriptions. Nothing in creation is bereft of these *guṇas*, and wisdom lies in developing the *sattva* to the utmost dominance. The culmination of that development of *sattva* lies in the ultimate leap from the realm of the *guṇas* to the order of being transcendent of the *guṇas*. All this is common material and Rāmānuja's account conforms to the common pattern of thought.

The *Gītā* describes *Prakṛti* in its aspect of enveloping the *Jiva* with ignorance concerning the supreme reality as '*Māyā*'.

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिस्सर्वमिदं जगत् ।

मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम् ॥

देवीह्येषा गुणमपो मम माया दुरत्यया । (VII. 13, 14.)

The problem at once arises whether the *Gītā* does not regard the external world of matter as ultimately unreal. Rāmānuja rejects emphatically such an interpretation. For him *Māyā* means 'विचित्रकार्यकरी' an existent entity with wondrous fecundity, producing a bewildering variety of effects. An illusion is called *Māyā*, because, in it a thought comes into being without the casual operation of the objective situation and thereby the normal rule of the object producing the related thought is circumvented. This too is an instance of wondrous productivity.

The result of this interpretation is that nature is real and non-illusory. Rāmānuja does not see anywhere in the *Gītā* the doctrine of the unreality of the external world. Nature is not an illusion but in the abundance of nature's wondrous powers, there is also the power productive of illusions. Illusion is not constitutive of nature but is one of nature's possible operations.

If *Prakṛti* is an ontological variety and not a mere phenomenal presentation, its exact status requires to be determined. Is it a self-existent reality, explicable by itself? The *Gītā*, for Rāmānuja, contains explicit repudiation of such a Naturalism. The verse

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ (VII. 4.)

does not mean for him 'My *Prakṛti* is divided eight-fold,' rather it means 'this *Prakṛti* divided eight-fold is mine': प्रकृतिरियं..... मदीयेति विद्धि.

The fact of *Prakṛti* belonging to God is the focal point of the assertion. Often *Prakṛti* is spoken of as one with God, in order to bring out the reality of divine immanence. The specific powers of the different aspects of nature are the results of the presence of the divine in them. This immanence necessitates the adoption of the language of pantheism. But it is not the usual shallow pantheism, for to God belongs the higher *Prakṛti* also called the *Jīva*, and the two together also do not exhaust God's glory. In the cosmic form they in their entirety are 'एकस्य' interpreted by Rāmānuja as 'एकदेशस्य'. They constitute a part of

the realm of being belonging to God. The appropriate word descriptive of nature's ontological status is '*vibhūti*'. The tenth chapter is devoted to the portrayal of some select *Vibhūti*s of God. Nature is not self-supporting, it is not undivine ; on the contrary it proclaims the grandeur of the deity. According to Rāmānuja, contemplation of the creative immanence of God in nature brings about the intensification and enhancement of the devotion to God. स्वैश्वर्यस्वकल्याणगुणगणप्रपञ्चानुसंधानेन भक्तिविवृद्धिप्रकारमाह' (X. 4.) is his characterization of the *vibhūti-yoga*. The concept of *vibhūti* as applied to Nature negates the illusionist hypothesis and also the naturalistic denial of the Supracosmic ground of nature. It also corrects the pantheistic error of regarding it as exhaustive of the divine abundance. The philosophy of nature presented in the *Gītā*, according to Rāmānuja, eliminates these three errors of illusionism, naturalism, and uncritical pantheism, all the three of which are at bottom forms of atheism. The final truth is summed up in the verse :

अथवा बहूनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।

विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ (X. 42.)

### III

The finite self, the individual soul, is commonly named the *Jīva*. We will now turn to the teaching of the *Gītā* concerning it in the light of Rāmānuja's elucidation. This is the higher *Prakṛti* of God according to the 7th chapter.

The essential nature of the self is indicated by the term *Kṣetrajña* even as the *Brahma-sūtra* indicates it by the word *jña*. The fundamental truth about the self is that it is the subject of knowledge, the knower. It is described 'अप्रमेय' and for Rāmānuja it means that it is the प्रमाता.

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः ।

तेषामादित्यवज्ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत् परम् ॥ (V. 16.)

This verse proves for Rāmānuja that *jñāna* is the essential character of the self. From this single fact of the self being the

knower in its fundamental nature, all its other basic characteristics are deduced by Rāmānuja. The second chapter sets forth the immortality of the *Jīva*. The crucial verse is :

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताश्शरीरिणः ।

अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत ॥ (II. 18.)

For Rāmānuja अप्रमेय means प्रमाता and the fact of being the knower implies integral self-identity and hence the non-composite character and the consequent impossibility of disintegration. Here we have the basic epistemological argument for immortality. It is this argument that the *Brahmasūtra* also advances against the Buddhist theory of the serial self. Kant recognizes this principle in his doctrine of the 'unity of apperception' but refuses to take metaphysical cognizance of the principle. It is just unity of function and not unity of being for him. But the whole being of the self lies in the function of knowing and it is waste of ingenuity not to see in the unity of function, the disclosure of the unity of being. His further suggestion that the self may perish by attenuation of consciousness though its substantive nature may remain non-composite, overlooks the possibility that the substance in the Soul-substance is also of the nature of consciousness. For Rāmānuja *jñāna* is the *dharmi-Svarūpa* of the Ātman in so far as it is self-aware and it is *dharma-bhūta* in so far as it exercises itself in the cognizing of other existents. Rāmānuja counters the theory that there is one universal self and the plurality of selves is just a phenomenal encrustation. For him the verse

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥ (II. 12.)

is decisive on the question. The verse does not embody the vestige of popular pluralism as alleged but actually takes up a pluralistic attitude. The plurality of individual selves is as much a fact as their immortality. Further, the process of Lord Kṛṣṇa instructing Arjuna or for that matter, of any enlightened preceptor imparting Vedānta to his disciple, implies that the plurality of individual selves is a metaphysical fact. This plurality is not

just an illusion forming part of bondage. The emancipated souls are described as if their many-ness remains unimpaired.

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः ।

तेषामादित्यवज्ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत् परम् ॥ (V. 16.)

Commenting on this verse Rāmānuja says :

तेषामिति विनष्टाज्ञानानां बहुत्वाभिधानादात्मस्वरूपबहुत्वं न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं इत्युपक्रमावगतमत्र स्पष्टतरमुक्तम् । न चेदं बहुत्वमुपाधिकृतं, विनष्टाज्ञानानामुपाधिगन्धाभावात् ।

Even as being the subject of knowledge is fundamental to the self, the self is also a free agent in relation to action. कर्तृत्व is a real feature of the self.

Freedom of will, ethical initiative or conative spontaneity is characteristic of the self. Will is not to be ascribed to the psychophysical frame of personality ; nor is the individual self a mechanical instrument of divine action. It is true that in the stage of samsāric degradation the *Jīva* works as if under the compulsions of nature. But even that is due to its own free self-abrogation. In the exalted phase of godliness it surrenders itself to God, its being, will and destiny being finally offered without reservation to Him; but this Self-surrender is a free act of choice and voluntary dedication and marks the beginning of enhanced activity for the glory of God, a willing adoration. In neither extreme is freedom annihilated, in the former it is abrogated by misguided choice and in the latter it is sublimated in self-effacing devotion. In the intermediate levels of mundane life free exercise of choice and responsibility is present more unmistakably. Rāmānuja discusses this question under the 3rd, 5th, 13th and 18th chapters. His essential position stands expressed, in the following passage :

एतदुक्तं भवति — परमात्मना दत्तैस्तदाधारैश्च करणकलेबरादिभिः तदाहित-  
शक्तिभिस्खयं च जीवात्मा तदाधारस्तदाहितशक्तिस्सन् कर्मनिष्पत्तये  
स्वेच्छया करणाद्यधिष्ठानाकारं प्रयत्नं चारभते । तदन्तर्स्थितः  
परमात्मा स्वानुमतिदानेन तं प्रवर्तयतीति जीवस्यापि स्वबुद्धयेव

प्रवृत्तिहेतुत्वमस्ति ; यथा गुरुतरशिलामहीरुहादि चलनादिफलप्रवृत्तिषु बहुपुरुषसाध्यासु बहूनां हेतुत्वं विधिनिषेधभावत्वं चेती ॥

(XVIII 14, 15.)

That कर्तृत्व does imply some change in the agent goes without saying and the eternal nature of the self as conceived by Rāmānuja does not exclude the possibility of all types of change. The notion of the self as a moral agent denies materialistic determinism, the view of God's omnipotence as excluding human freedom and the theory of a totally immutable self. Connected with कर्तृत्व is the further characteristic of the self, भोक्तृत्व. The *Gīta* itself enunciates :

पुरुषस्सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते । (XIII. 20.)

The self is that in which experiences of the nature of enjoyment and sorrow take place. The mundane emotive dualities as well as the higher values have the *Jivātmān* as the enjoyer, in reality the fact that he is the knower carries the implication that he is the enjoyer. Enjoyment is nothing but a maturation of contemplation when the object of contemplation is such that it conduces to the fulfilment of the self contemplating. When the self is properly discerned and the objects sought by it are properly evaluated the self is impelled to seek God by way of knowing and in Him it finds its fullest enjoyment. In this final stage *jñāna* is the same as *bhoga*. Rāmānuja does not countenance the hypothesis of a phenomenal self as the subject of enjoyment. Enjoyment implies some mutation, no doubt, but a self that excludes all the dynamism involved in knowing, willing and feeling is almost a non-self. In criticism of the Sāṃkhya position Rāmānuja says :

भोक्तृत्वं बुद्धेरेव संपद्यते इति आत्मसद्भावे प्रमाणाभावश्च स्यात् ; पुरुषोऽस्ति भोक्तृभावादिति हि तेषामप्युपगमः । (*Śrī bhāṣya*, (II-3.37.)

In the final analysis *jñāna* is the same as *ānanda* and as such the knowing self has to be a *bhoktr*.

The *Gītā* has the following pronouncements on another aspect of the self.

पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः । (V. 19.)

इहैव तैर्जितस्सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः । निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म (V. 19.)  
आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन । ....स योगी परमो मतः ॥

(V. 32.)

The main principle enunciated herein is affirmed by Rāmānuja to mean the equality of all individual selves in their basic nature. He says आत्मयाथात्म्यविदः ज्ञानैकाकारतया सर्वत्र समदर्शिनः । विषमाकारस्तु प्रकृतेः, नात्मनः ।

While Rāmānuja asserts the irreducible plurality of the finite selves as part of the teaching of the *Gītā*, he upholds with equal force that the selves are mutually equal in nature and status on the basis of these clear statements of the text.

After these consideration it is necessary to discuss the central problem in the doctrine of the individual self. According to Rāmānuja the fifteenth chapter sharply differentiates *Puruṣottama*, the supreme Being, from the individual self. The individual self in its bound condition is named *kṣara* and in its liberated and perfected state it becomes describable as *akṣara*. Rāmānuja explains the reasons for the two designations. Now God named *Puruṣottama* in the chapter is declared as being different from, अन्य as surpassing उत्तम and as going beyond अतीत the individual self whether the latter be bound or liberated. That the *akṣara* is to be interpreted as the liberated self is insisted upon on the following ground: it is a *Puruṣa* and hence cannot be *Prakṛti* either in the causal state or in the manifested and developed state, and it is said to be transcended by *Puruṣottama* and hence cannot be the same as the supreme spirit. This distinction is present even in the seventh chapter where the *Jīva* is named the higher *Prakṛti* of *Īśvara* and not identical with him. While this distinction between *īśvara* and *Jīva* by virtue of *īśvara*'s transcendence is an undeniable part of the doctrine of the *Gītā* according to Rāmānuja, there is another complementary thesis. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He is the *Kṣetrajña*, individual self also. Here some kind of identity is surely meant and it cannot be the literal kind of identity that would cancel divine transcendence. Rāmānuja understands by this identity, *Īśvara*'s

immanent control of the *Jīva* and His eternal appropriation of it as His own *Vibhūti*. God sustains the *Jīva*, actuates it and uses it and hence He may be said to include it, even as the finite soul includes the body within the totality of its life. The fruitful and illuminating conception that would bring together and explain God's transcendence of the *Jīva* and His identity with it, is given according to Rāmānuja in the fifteenth chapter.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः । (XV. 7.)

This doctrine of the *Jivātman* as an अंश or part of the *Paramātman* does justice to all the varied pronouncements of the text on the relation of the two. Transcendence and identity are to be taken as aspects of the comprehensive fact of God's possession of the *Jīva* as a part of His totality of being.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः puts together and explains the two partial statements उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः and क्षेत्रज्ञ चापि मां विद्धि. While interpreting मत्परं in the controversial phrase अनादि मत्परं Rāmānuja says अहं परो यस्य तन्मत्परम् । भगवच्छरीरतया भगवच्छेषतैकरसं ह्यात्मस्वरूपम् ।

The three-fold implication of divine immanence in the *Jīva* as furnishing its आधार, नियन्ता and शेषी makes the *Jīva* describable as the body of *Īśvara*. All this wealth of import is conveyed by the expression अंश.

#### IV

It remains now to attempt an integrated statement of the nature of God according to the *Gītā* as expounded by Rāmānuja. Undoubtedly this constitutes the crowning phase of the metaphysics of the *Gītā*.

It is interesting to raise a question at this initial stage as to what proof the *Gītā* offers for the existence of God. From the stand point of Rāmānuja the question would indeed be ridiculous. The *Brahma-Sūtra* may discuss the proofs for the reality of *Brahman*. But the *Gītā* for Rāmānuja is a revelation by God Himself to Arjuna and while the highest Deity presents itself to vision and speaks forth the saving knowledge the demand for a proof of its being cannot arise in the mind of Arjuna. When

God reveals Himself to man, He has not got to propound proofs for His existence. A human teacher or a human theistic treatise may engage in the task of advancing the required proof. The self-revealing God imparting spiritual wisdom has furnished all the proof, nay, the best proof, by the very fact of that self-revelation. Further proof and that an infinitely expanded proof is offered in the presentation of the *Viśvarūpa*. That brings about the actual perception of the Infinite. All that is required for the attainment of the vision is symbolized by दिव्यं चक्षुः which Śrī Kṛṣṇa graciously confers on Arjuna. That gift really means the fitness for the experience of God and the fitness is brought about by *bhakti*. There is a significant epithet of *bhakti*: प्रत्यक्षावगमम्. Rāmānuja explains it in the following words: भक्तिरूपेणोपासनेनोपास्यमानोऽहं तदानीमेवोपासितुः प्रत्यक्षतामुपगतो भवामीत्यर्थः । (IX. 2.)

That an experience of God such as the one vouchsafed to Arjuna is veridical is to be established by two considerations :

(a) It must not be a mere reiteration of mundane knowledge. It should not be just an intensified recollection of what has been learnt in the course of antecedent experience by way of scriptural study or reasoning. Often such a wishful recollection may take on delusive vividness and the image may pose as a perceptual object. (b) The reality supposed to be apprehended should not be something wholly out of relation to the established facts of non-mystical experience. It must not be an alternative realm standing in contradiction to the world of mundane actuality. In that case instead of resolving contradictions, it would be generating a new contradiction. To be a genuine perception of reality an experience must be integrated in itself and must introduce integration into the otherwise incoherent empirical world. Its authenticity is to be measured by its coherent reconstruction of the uncoordinated multiplicities of every day experience.

Now Arjuna's vision of God satisfies this two-fold criterion of novelty and coherence. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asks him to behold ॥ His cosmic form wonders not seen before.

बहून्यदृष्टपूर्वाणि पश्याश्चर्याणि भारत । (XI. 6.)

Rāmānuja explains the significant injunction :

इह जगति प्रत्यक्षदृष्टानि शास्त्रदृष्टानि च यानि वस्तूनि, तानि सर्वाण्यन्यान्यपि सर्वेषु लोकेषु सर्वेषु च शास्त्रेष्वदृष्टपूर्वाणि....

Such is the meaning of अदृष्टपूर्व and thus the tremendous novelty of the experience is recorded. Similarly Arjuna is further enjoined to behold all the bewildering multiplicity of the world as located in that single all-encompassing form and as gathered at a single point in it.

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् । (XI. 7.)

Arjuna is said to have had a vision of that integrating reality.

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।

अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ॥ (XI. 13.)

देवदेवस्य दिव्ये शरीरे अनेकधा प्रविभक्तं प्रकृतिपुरुषात्मकं कृत्स्नं जगत् ; एकस्थमेकदेशस्थं ; पाण्डवो भगवत्प्रसादलब्धतद्दर्शनानुगुणदिव्यचक्षुरपश्यत् ।

The infinite plurality of existents is unified into a coherent pattern and is shown as a factor in the immense vista of the divine Reality. There is novelty because the divine object transcends the customary world and there is coherence because that world is translated into being a factor in the infinite harmony of divine existence.

That God is the supreme Reality and that nothing higher is there or is conceivable is forcefully brought out in the statement: मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय. There is nothing other than God, which surpasses Him.

मत्तोऽन्यत् मदूयतिरिक्तं ज्ञानबलादिगुणान्तरयोगि किञ्चिदपि परतरं नास्ति ।

The statement denies the philosophical position that posits a Reality transcending God and of which God Himself is supposed an appearance or phenomenal manifestation or even a limited and conditioned presentation. On Rāmānuja's interpretation, views such as those of Saṅkara and Yādavaprakāśa stand rejected by this metaphysical exaltation of God. God is the highest

reality and not a phenomenal or conditioned version of a higher Absolute. The *akṣara* spoken of in the twelfth chapter is the same as the *kṣetrajña* of the thirteenth and, fifteenth chapter definitively places *Puruṣottama* above the *akṣara*. Not merely is the *akṣara* surpassed, it itself constitutes a power of God, the *parā Prakṛti* wielded by Him.

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य विभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः । (XV. 17.)

*Puruṣottama* is the inexhaustible *Īśvara* premeating and sustaining, the three worlds. The three worlds for Rāmānuja are the realm of matter, the realm of selves in *saṃsāra* and the realm of emancipated selves called the *akṣara* : लोकत्रय इति लोकः, तत्त्रयम् लोकत्रयम् ; अचेतनं तत्संसृष्टचेतनो मुक्तचेति प्रमाणावगम्यमेतत् त्रयम् ।

An impersonal Absolute above *Puruṣottama* in the scale of metaphysical eminence is not, according to Rāmānuja, propounded or even implied in the *Gītā*. He is Brahman that is *param*. The metaphysical nature of Brahman is not conceived as excluding determination by attributes. Arjuna puts together what he has learnt about Kṛṣṇa and acknowledges its ultimate truth :

परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।  
 पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यमादिदेवमजं विभुम् ॥  
 आहुस्त्वामृषयस्सर्वे देवर्षिर्नारदस्तथा ।  
 असितो देवलो व्यासस्स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥  
 सर्वमेवदत्तां मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव । (X. 12-14.)

The *Gītā* frequently names Kṛṣṇa as *Yogeśvara* and Rāmānuja understands by *yoga* in this context the wealth of divine attributes.

Commenting on

एतां विभूतिं योगं च मम यो वेत्ति वत्त्वतः ।  
 सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ॥ (X. 7.)

he interprets मम योगं as मम हेयप्रत्यनीककल्याणगुणगणरूपं योगम् । This is the significance attached to all the attributions of *yoga* to Kṛṣṇa. The view that Brahman, which is *nirguṇa*, becomes *saguṇa*, out of compassion to the dull-witted is an aberration of Advaita ; for the *nirguṇa* Brahman cannot possibly harbour the

attribute of compassion. Even so, the theory of *avatāra* if taken as true imports into the nature of the deity countless attributes implied in that compassionate self-disclosure. Elimination of the wicked is a minor incident of *avatāra*, contends Rāmānuja, and the paramount purpose is the saving of the devout. This साधु-परित्राण on Rāmānuja's interpretation consists of the self-revelation of God to the seekers. Those that seek God should not be without Him. The attributes productive of such dynamism of self-disclosure are surely constitutive of the very essence of Divinity. While the metaphysical attributes such as self-existence, consciousness, joy, purity and infinity are taken for granted, the *Gītā* unlike the Upaniṣads, takes particular care to dwell on the love and compassion of God. The Lord of the *Viśvarūpa* dimension has the sun and moon as His eyes. Rāmānuja says that the sun represents the unapproachable grandeur प्रताप of the Lord, while the moon symbolizes the grace प्रसाद. The latter aspect of the deity is beautifully brought out in the following :

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुस्साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् । (IX. 18.)

As a whole this love-aspect of the deity pervades the entire text.

God's relation to the cosmos of unthinking matter and the finite souls alive with the eternal light of consciousness is conveyed by the concepts of विभूति, मदीया प्रकृति and अंश. That cosmos forms an inseparable adjective of God. This relation of the finite realm to God is so organic and that realm is embedded in Him so wholly and unconditionally that we can say that He is all that exists.

सर्वं समामोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः । (XI. 40.) exclaims Arjuna in the height of his ecstatic vision. Rāmānuja explains:

सर्वमात्मतया समामोषि, ततस्सर्वोऽसि यतस्त्वं सर्वं चिदचिद्वस्तुजात-  
मात्मतया समामोषि, अतः सर्वस्य चिदचिद्वस्तुजातस्य त्वच्छरीरतया  
त्वत्प्रकारत्वात् सर्वप्रकारः त्वमेव सर्वशब्दवाच्योऽसीत्यर्थः ।

Hence Arjuna invokes Him as सर्व. The manner in which the world belongs to God is no easy matter to comprehend.

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।  
 मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ॥  
 न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।  
 भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः । (IX. 4, 5.)

Rāmānuja interprets this enigmatic statement in the following words :

इदं चेतनाचेतनात्मकं कृत्स्नं जगत् मया अन्तर्यामिणा ततम् अस्त्य जगतो धारणार्थं नियमनार्थं च शेषित्वेन व्याप्तमित्यर्थः । ततो मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि । सर्वाणि भूतानि मय्यन्तर्यामिणि स्थितानि । न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः । अहं तु न तदायक्तिस्थितिः । मत्स्थितौ तैर्न कश्चिदुपकार इत्यर्थः । न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि । न घटादीनां जलादेरिव मम धारकत्वम् । कथम् ? मत्सङ्कल्पेन । पश्य ममैश्वरं योगम् । अन्यत्र कुत्राचिदसंभावनीयं मदसाधारणमाश्चर्यं योगं पश्य । कोऽसौ योगः ? भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः । सर्वेषां भूतानां भर्ताऽहम् । नैव तैः कश्चिदपि ममोपकारः । ममात्मैव भूतभावनः । मम मनोमयस्सङ्कल्प एव भूतानां भावयिता धारयिता नियन्ता च ।

God permeates all beings as their inner ruler. So naturally they abide in Him. He does not dwell in them in the sense of drawing His being from them, even as they draw their being from Him. The mutual indwelling in the sense of deriving sustenance mutually is countered here. That they dwell in Him and derive being from Him is not something that happens to be so and through any cause or causes other than His determination to that effect. He wills their being and wills their derivation of their existence and operativeness from Him. This is creative immanence along with transcendent perfection and self-sufficiency and it is immanence by inward choice and no external necessity. Much thought at once subtle, far reaching and profound is packed into these enigmatic verses of the *Gītā* and Rāmānuja offers effective direction for elucidation.

## V

That the principal goal and purpose of life, the ultimate value, is the attainment of God is made emphatically clear in the

*Gītā*. To refer to only one passage out of many that are equally good : यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्गम परमं मम । Eternal life is life in God.

That this end has to be worked for with all the resources of life is a fundamental truth.

By *sādhana* is meant the planned effort towards the realization of the supreme goal, through an appropriate utilization of all the resources. The *Gītā* is the supreme classic on this theme. Rāmānuja while introducing the text affirms that the *sādhana* advocated by the *Gītā* is *Bhakti-yoga*: ‘भक्तियोगमवतारयामास’.

*Bhakti* may be provisionally defined as intensely loving contemplation of God. But such love of God does not arise except at a high level of spiritual purity. Rāmānuja understands Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be saying in the 12th chapter : मत्प्रियत्वेन मदेकप्राप्यताबुद्धिर्हि प्रक्षीणाशेषपापस्यैव जायते ।

Only when the seeker understands his own nature thoroughly and realizes that it is such that complete self-fulfilment for him lies only in God-realization, he can have love of God. That level of self-knowledge is to be attained through what is called *jñāna-yoga*. This *jñāna-yoga* itself, understood as intellectual self-culture motivated by desire for self-knowledge can be practised only by a soul freed from the taint of worldly values.

This level of purity supplying the requisite basis for *jñāna-yoga* is to be attained by what is called *Karma-yoga*. Hence Rāmānuja says that *The Gītā* promulgates *bhakti-yoga* which is ज्ञानकर्मानुगृहीत. He lays down the entire procedure in the following clear terms.

अनभिसंहितफलेन मदाराधनरूपेणानुष्ठितेन कर्मणा सिद्धेनात्मध्यानेन निवृत्ताविद्यादिसर्वतिरोधाने मच्छेषतैकस्वरूपे प्रत्यगात्मनि साक्षात्कृते सति मयि परा भक्तिः स्वयमेवोत्पद्यते ।

It is necessary to go into this comprehensive plan in some detail. It may be noted at once that the *bhakti* under question is neither an alternative to *jñāna* and *karma* nor instrumental to *jñāna* and *karma* but the very fruition of *jñāna* and *karma*.

## VI

There is not much dispute as to the insistence on *karma-yoga* by the *Gītā*. Rāmānuja subscribes to this common finding. But he discerns certain features in it not so universally noted.

As a basis for *karma-yoga* there should be a clear intellectual apprehension of the nature of the individual self. This is the *sāṃkhya-yoga* mentioned in the second chapter. This again is the *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ* as it forms a clear discriminative knowledge of the self. *Karma* to be *karma-yoga* must embody in itself a three-fold renunciation. It must involve the conception that the self engaged in action is just an instrument of God. The action being performed must not be looked upon as the action belonging to the agent but as action pertaining or belonging to God. The work is God's work. The fruit of the action must be dedicated to God. This is renunciation of doership of work and the fruits thereof. The conception actuating work is to be of this description :

स्वकीयेनात्मना कर्त्रा स्वकीयैश्चोपाकरणैस्वाराधनैकप्रयोजनाय  
परमपुरुषस्सर्वशेषी सर्वेश्वरः स्वयमेव स्वकर्माणि कारयति ।

(III. 30.)

As a matter of fact *karma-yoga* of the right type is action from an outward point of view but in its inward essence it is *jñāna* itself. It involves a discriminative awareness of the self and also an awareness of God as permeating the entire situation of action. This is the significance of the famous passage :

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।  
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥ (IV. 24.)

This fusion is what is intended by the puzzling declaration that a wise man sees *karma* in *akarma* and *akarma* in *karma*.

क्रियमाणमेव कर्मात्मयाथात्म्यानुसन्धानेन ज्ञानाकारं यः पश्येत्, तच्च ज्ञानं कर्मण्यन्तर्गततया कर्माकारं यः पश्येदित्युक्तं भवति । एवमात्मयाथात्म्यानुसन्धानगर्भं कर्म यः पश्येत्, स बुद्धिमान् । (IV. 18.)

Between the outward aspect of *karma* and inner aspect of *jñāna* the inner aspect is of greater value :

श्रेयान् द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञात् ज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप । (IV. 33.)

As one progresses in *karma-yoga*, this inner aspect progressively develops and finally matures into *jñāna-yoga* which forms the consummation of *karma-yoga*.

The *Gītā* meets the question of the relative superiority of *karma* and *jñāna yoga* twice, in the 3rd and 5th chapters. The answer of Śrī Kṛṣṇa according to Rāmānuja is clear and decisive. Some are not fit for *jñāna-yoga*. For them *karma-yoga* is easy, natural and carries no risk. Even those who are fit for *jñāna-yoga*, have to practise some *karma* of the nature of sacrifice for meeting the necessities of life. Those who are spiritually advanced and are such that by observing their conduct lesser men model their own lives on that pattern are to practise *karma* as a matter of *loka-saṅgraha*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa cites His own life as an illustration of this principle. If the distinguished abandon *karma-yoga* as they no longer need it and if those who still need it follow their example and give it up, the former suffer a retributive lapse in their spiritual condition.

लोकरक्षार्थं शिष्टतया प्रथितेन श्रेष्ठेन स्ववर्णाश्रमोचितं कर्म सकलं  
सर्वदाऽनुष्ठेयम् ; अन्यथा लोकनाशजनितं पापं ज्ञानयोगादप्येनं प्रच्यावयेत् ।  
(III. 21.)

The *Gītā* does not confine itself to a narrow ritualistic notion of *karma* but expounds the principle of *karma* so as to comprehend all moods of activity.

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥ (IX. 27.)

Within *karma* Rāmānuja includes लोकिक, वैदिक, नित्य, and नैमित्तिक. Rāmānuja sees *karma-yoga* to be the initial phase of *bhakti-yoga* itself and hence the magnificent description of the *bhakta* found in the 12th chapter is taken by him to apply to the *karma-yogin*.

## VII

Perfection in *karma-yoga* results in *jñāna-yoga*. By *jñāna-yoga* Rāmānuja understands not the intellectual approach to God but a life of meditation on the intrinsic nature of the individual self, with a view to gaining an immediate and intuitive realization of its fundamental essence and characteristics.

It is the seeker established in this life that is called the *sthita-prajña* and again it is his basic qualities that are enumerated in the 13th chapter. He, again, it is that is described as the *jijñāsu* in the 7th chapter. In him the conception of the Ātman acquired as the precondition of *karma-yoga*, which again continues to form an inner element in *karma-yoga*, itself fructifies into a contemplative seeking of it. The *sthita-prajña* passes through four ascending levels according to Rāmānuja. He, first of all, withdraws the senses from their respective objects even as the tortoise draws its limbs within its shell. Then he attends to the purification of the mind from desires for other ends. In the third stage he makes the purified mind dwell repeatedly on the glories of the self. Lastly he gets established in the blissful awareness of the self, which naturally marks the cessation of all other worldly desires. From the last stage there is the transition to the final intuition of the self. The speciality in Rāmānuja's handling of the theme of *jñāna-yoga* is that, though it is directed towards the individual self and immediacy of direct vision, it includes an essential element of devotion to God. The purification that is necessary for it is procurable only through such devotion. The truth is conveyed, according to Rāmānuja, in the declaration of the *Gītā* : तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः । (II. 61)

He says :

मनसि मद्दिषये सति निर्दग्धाशेषकल्मषतया निर्मलीकृतं विषयानुरागरहितं मन इन्द्रियाणि स्ववशानि करोति । ततो वश्येन्द्रियं मन आत्मदर्शनाय प्रभवति ।

It is for this reason that the *jijñāsu* of the 7th chapter is given to practice of *bhakti*. The idea is reinforced again in the

13th chapter by including मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी (VIII. 10.) among the requisites of *jñāna-yoga*. It is to be remarked that for Rāmānuja the principal subject-matter of *jñāna* in this stage is the '*pratyagātman*' and not '*paramātman*' and the *bhakti* that is practised is instrumental to self-realization. But its indispensability is beyond question. If the *jñānin* foolishly relies on his own power for the needed self-purification he lands in disaster. The verses depicting the disaster द्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः etc. up to बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति (II. 62, 63) signify for Rāmānuja, the spiritual degradations that befall a *jñānin* bereft of *bhakti*. Even as *karma-yoga* may be viewed in the larger perspective as the first phase of *bhakti*, the *jñāna-yoga* too is a stage of *bhakti*, the next one, for it too includes *bhakti* and the self-knowledge it seeks is destined to lead up to ultimate *bhakti*.

### VIII

The conclusion of the 5th chapter and the whole of the 6th chapter of the *Gītā* are devoted, according to Rāmānuja, to the exposition of *yoga*. *Yoga*, in this context, means what it means conventionally in Indian philosophical culture. For Rāmānuja it means *ātmāvalokana*, the inward perception of the self. Such a perception is both 'self-knowledge', and 'self-becoming' for it inaugurates the life of the self in its authentic self-hood. The self consists of *jñāna*, it comes to be known through the efficacy of *jñāna-yoga* and the outcome of that *jñāna* is the emergent exercise of self-hood by way of unimpeded and expansive knowledge. Rāmānuja is clear that this 'self-intuition' differs from *jñāna-yoga* in being immediate and direct while *jñāna-yoga* is just a meditative approach to it and that this is an absolute necessity for the emergence of *bhakti*. *Jñāna-yoga* is not absolutely necessary, for the possibility is conceded that *karma-yoga* itself by an intensification of its inner aspect can directly bring about *ātmāvalokana*, without the mediation of *jñāna-yoga*. But *yoga* as *ātmāvalokana* is an indispensable step in spiritual progress. Rāmānuja's treatment of it in the course of his elucidation of the relevant portion of the *Gītā* contains some cardinal tenets.

1. While the principal theme to be apprehended by *yoga* is the self in its distinctive nature, for the acquisition of that high insight, devoted meditation on God is a necessary means.

2. There are four ascending stages in the intuition of the self as there are four ascending stages in the life of the *sthita-prajña*.

(a) The *yogin* apprehends the essential self and all individual selves as being fundamentally alike in nature.

(b) He notes the basic likeness of the individual self to the divine self, in respect of purity and holiness. Thus while apprehending the pure self, he apprehends the divine self also. The pure self is such that it carries intimations of the supreme self.

(c) This ecstatic intuition of the self and its likeness to all selves and even to God Himself from the standpoint of purity, enters the normal plane of consciousness also and transmutes it to its own likeness. The high achievement of *yoga* in the movements of mystic apprehension does not remain an isolated experience at the high altitude, but over-flows to the post-yogic normal life and floods it, as it were, and transforms it into a continuance of itself.

(d) In this new mode of life transcendence of the normal values takes place. The petty joys and depressions of the unregenerate mundane life lose their power over the seeker and he gets established in perpetual peace. The height of yogic experience has the effect of heightening the totality of life and works the miracle of a complete sublimation.

3. What does a *yogin* actually intuit the self as being, in his utmost height of perception? He intuits it as transcending the body. He intuits it as of the nature of consciousness or knowledge. It is intelligence in its original nature. He intuits further and this is of capital importance to Rāmānuja, that the self belongs to God as it dwells in Him, is under His control and is a means to Him. This is the greatest discovery. Being convinced of this nature of the self, he realizes as a result of this indubitable intuition, that his self is such that it can reach the consummation of its being in nothing other than the realization of God. Such a realization marks the beginning of ultimate

*bhakti*. The whole march of *sādhana* upto this stage of the origination of *bhakti* is beautifully and most clearly delineated in the following sentence :

ततोऽनभिसंहितफलेन मदाराधनरूपेणानुष्ठितेन कर्मणा सिद्धेनात्मध्यानेन निवृत्ताविद्यादिसर्वतिरोधाने मच्छेषतैकस्वरूपे प्रत्यगात्मनि साक्षात्कृते सति मयि पराभक्तिः स्वयमेवोत्पद्यते ।

## IX

Even as Arjuna raises the question twice as to which of the two *yogas*, *karma* and *jñāna*, is superior to the other, he raises the question with regard to the relative status of the *yoga* of *jñāna* and that of *bhakti* in the 12th chapter. Rāmānuja restricts the scope of the question as pertaining to only the ease of performance and speed of fructification. He points out that the highest place has already been accorded to *bhakti* from the standpoint of intrinsic and objective worth in the conclusion of the sixth chapter. There it is said :

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।

श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥ (VI. 47.)

Hence the position of *bhakti* as the highest phase of *sādhana* is indisputably laid down in the *Gītā* according to Rāmānuja. The question of the twelfth chapter is appropriately answered. While *bhakti* is the real and highest *sādhana*, it is also an easier and speedier means for one in whom love of God has already dawned, and for the love-less spiritual aspirant *jñāna-yoga* or even *karma-yoga* has to be recommended as easier and speedier. It is necessary to discriminate among the possible forms of *bhakti*. There is the lowest type in which devotion to God is practised for purposes of securing material values. The devotion to God for attaining to self-knowledge is higher than this. These two are forms of instrumental devotion and they are not love of God for His own sake. Hence they are not forms of exclusive love. They also pass away when the ends sought are attained. The third type of devotion is love of God for attaining Him. He constitutes the end. Hence it is exclusive and

enduring. Śrī Kṛṣṇa praises all the three types of devotees as 'generous' and Rāmānuja interprets the term of praise to signify that the opportunity they offer for the bestowal of grace makes them benefactors to Him. The urge to be gracious and bountiful is so great in God. His eagerness for redemptive self-manifestation is so intense. But the third type of devotion is the highest and rarest. Its characteristic feature is that it springs from the knowledge of God and it is search for God as all in all. The *bhakti* embodies the thought 'वासुदेवस्सर्वम्'. Rāmānuja explains it to mean : वासुदेव एव मम परमप्राप्यं प्रापकं च । अन्यदपि यन्मनो रथवर्ति स एव मम तत् सर्वमिति ।

Such a devotion is open to all. This is a special point and in the interpretation of it Rāmānuja appears definitely to be rejecting the contention of the *apaśūdrādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra*.

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥ (IX. 29.)

The interpretation of the verse runs as follows :

जातितश्चाकारतस्वभांवतो ज्ञानतश्चात्यन्यतोत्कृष्टापकृष्टरूपेण वर्तमानेषु सर्वेषु भूतेषु समाश्रयणीयत्वे समोऽहम् । अयं जात्याकारस्वभावज्ञानादिभिर्निकृष्ट इति समाश्रयणे न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति । तथा समाश्रितत्वातिरेकेण जात्यादिभिरत्यन्तोत्कृष्टोऽयमिति समाश्रयणे न कश्चित् प्रियोऽस्ति ।

*Bhakti* of this supreme level of excellence is the ultimate means for the attainment of God. This attainment is in three levels. They are the intellectual understanding of God, the direct intuitive experience of God and eternal communion with Him. The *Gītā* emphatically declares that *bhakti* is the one unfailing and sufficient means for all the three levels of attainment.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।

ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥ (XI. 54.)

Rāmānuja has not got to establish the supremacy of *bhakti* as the means for God-realization. It is set down here clearly and is repeated in the eighteenth chapter also. He transcribes the

message of *bhakti* in simple words : अनन्यया तु भक्त्या तत्त्वतश्चास्त्रैर्ज्ञातुं, तत्त्वतस्साक्षात्कर्तुं, तत्त्वतः प्रवेष्टुं च शक्यः ।

The defining essence of *bhakti* is enunciated, according to Rāmānuja, in one line which occurs significantly enough twice in the *Gītā* and that at the grand conclusions of the chapters nine and eighteen.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

(IX. 34, XVIII. 65.)

The elucidation of the four central expressions must be presented.

मन्मना भव । मयि तैलधारावदविच्छेदेन निविष्टमना भव ।

मद्भक्तः । अत्यर्थमर्त्तिप्रयत्वेन युक्तो मन्मना भव ।

मद्याजी । अनवधिकातिशयप्रियमदनुभवकारितमद्यजनपरो भव ।

मां नमस्कुरु । अनवधिकातिशयप्रियमदनुभावकारितात्यर्थ-

प्रियाशेषशेषवृत्तावपर्यवस्यन् मय्यन्तरात्मन्यतिमात्रप्रह्वीभावव्यवसायं  
कुरु ।

*bhakti* is contemplation and that contemplation saturated with indescribable love. It is loving contemplation that issues in complete service. It is loving contemplation that is not content with the actual service rendered and therefore culminates in humble surrender. So *bhakti* in its fulness is constituted by contemplation filled with love and it expresses itself in services and surrender. It is at once thought, love, worship and dedication of self. One essential mark of this supreme *bhakti* Rāmānuja takes care to mention again and again (eleven times). It is the intense consciousness of the impossibility of supporting one's life without such a practice of the presence of God. A few instances of his statement of this characteristic may be adduced.

‘मर्त्तिप्रयत्वातिरेकेणानन्यासाधारणस्वभावतया मद्भक्तेनान्तरात्मना’;  
(VI. 47.)

‘अयं मया विना आत्मधारणासंभावनया मामेवानुत्तमं प्राप्यमा-  
स्थितः’; (VII. 18.)

‘ अत्यर्थमतिप्रियत्वेन मत्स्मृत्या विना आत्मधारणमलभमानः ’!

(XI. 55.)

‘ मतिप्रियत्वातिरेकेण मद्भजनेन विना मनसश्चात्मनश्च बाह्यकरणानां च धारणमलभमाना तद्भजनैकप्रयोजना भजन्ते ; (IX. 13.)

मद्गतप्राणाः—मद्गतजीविताः, मया विना आत्मधारणमलभमाना इत्यर्थः ।’ (X. 9.)

This means that to the supreme devotee life becomes insupportable without *bhakti*. *Bhakti* becomes the absolute and sole necessity for his very existence. There are pleasures which when actualized subtract from life. There are values with whose attainment as well as non-attainment in life is perfectly compatible. But the *Bhakti* that is spoken of here is such that it constitutes the sole foundation of the life and existence of the *bhakta*. Even as the finite self and the world of nature have God as their sole support, sovereign and end from the metaphysical standpoint, to the perfect devotee, devotion to God becomes the basis, guiding principle and supreme goal of his existence. This is axiological अपृथक्सिद्धि. He truly ‘is’ when filled with love of God and experiences himself as perishing into utter nothingness when he lacks it. It is to such people that Śrī Kṛṣṇa applies the term मत्परायण and मद्गतप्राण according to Rāmānuja.

## X

There is another factor integral to *bhakti* which, for Rāmānuja, is a fundamental part of the message of the *Gītā*. This is what is named *prapatti* in devotional tradition. It signifies *śaraṇāgati* or self-surrender. That the *Gītā* abounds in the teaching of this way to God can hardly be questioned. In the first place the whole discourse of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is for the resurrection of the spirit of Arjuna, who is a ‘*prapanna*’. The veil of *Māyā*, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, can be rent asunder through only *prapatti*. The shackles of the *guṇas* can be snapped only by *prapatti*. *Puruṣoṭhama* can be approached only by way of *prāpatti*. While summing up the substance of the entire discourse Śrī Kṛṣṇa places on record the final injunction.

ईश्वरस्सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।  
 भ्रामयन्त्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्राह्वानि मायया ॥  
 तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।  
 तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

(XVIII. 61, 62.)

Even in the statement of the essence of *bhakti*. मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु the last constituent signified by मां नमस्कुरु is undoubtedly *prapatti*. The culminating unit of teaching is the exhortation to surrender.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।  
 अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ (XVIII. 66.)

No wonder Rāmānuja affirms the all-important role of *prapatti*. It should be added emphatically that no other commentator fails to do so. The speciality in Rāmānuja's account lies in the clear grasp of the significance of the technic of *śaraṇāgati* and a thorough elucidation of the various levels and modes of its efficacy. *Prapatti* is what could generate *bhakti* when the devotee is depressed for want of it. When made part of *bhakti* it confers on it completeness and renders it fully effective. In otherwise hopeless cases, it can be used as a complete substitute for *bhakti*. The entire meaning of *prapatti* lies in a prayerful and humble transfer of one's spiritual responsibilities to God and make Him function in the abundance of His grace as the *sādhana* for man's attainment of Him. Rāmānuja expresses the last type of *prapatti* in the following matchless words;

परमपुरुषं भगवन्तं नारायणं स्वामित्वेन सुहृत्त्वेन गुरुत्वेन च परिगृह्य,  
 ऐकान्तिकात्यन्तिकतत्पादाम्बुजद्वयपरिचर्यैकमनोरथः तत्प्राप्तये च तत्पा-  
 दाम्बुजद्वयप्रपत्तेरन्यत्र मे कल्पकोटिसहस्रैणापि साधनमस्तीति मन्वानः,  
 तस्यैव भगवतो नारायणस्य चरणारविन्दयुगलमनन्यात्मसंजीवनेन  
 तद्गतसर्वभावेन शरणमब्रुवजेत् ।

## *Sadhana in Visishtadvaita*

[In this closely reasoned article Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, retired Head of the Dept. of Philosophy, Mysore University, analyses the scheme of the Sadhana of Bhakti laid down by Sri Ramanuja. He points out the place of Karma and Jnana in the path of devotion and explains the rationale of Prapatti, a mutant, which delivers the same supreme good as Bhakti, but is easier of adoption by the majority of aspirants.]

### *I Tattwa*

Ramanuja, the principal philosophical architect of Visishtadvaita, holds that Vedanta consists of three departments of inquiry in an organically connected manner. The first of them relates to Tattwa, metaphysical reality. The second is a determination of the final value or the ultimate Purushartha for man to strive after. The third field of consideration is 'Sadhana' or the plan of human endeavour towards its realization. It is evident that Sadhana is doubly conditioned and governed by the concepts of Tattwa and Purushartha, for man's quest must be founded on the nature of reality and must be for achieving the supreme value of his life.

(a) Reality for Ramanuja is something that cannot be construed in the materialistic sense, as a system of mere physical reality. Nor is it adequately understood in terms of two reals, matter and individual spirits, working together or in separation. It is something that transcends the physical order and realm of individual and finite selves. It is the Infinite and Supreme Spirit, designated as Brahman or Paramatman in the Upanishads as the Purshottama in the Gita and as Vishnu, Vasudeva and Narayana in the Vaishnava tradition as sanctioned by some prominent Vedic passages including the last chapter of the Taithireeya Upanishad. This Supreme Principle is further characterised—for to be uncharacterised is to be nothing—as

an abode of perfections, infinite such as absolute being, perfect knowledge, supreme joy and in every valid sense. It is one and all exceeding. The problem at this point of its characterisation is whether it negatives the world of matter and finite selves, which it surpasses and transcends, or contains them within itself as its own points of self-manifestation or embodiment. Is the non-duality of Brahman exclusive and negatory of the finite entities or are they simply parts or aspects of its infinite expanse? Ramanuja takes a decisive stand on this question and holds that the finites in their totality constitute the Viseshana, or Sareera, or Amsa, or Vibhuti of Brahman. Hence the Monism formulated by him is inclusive and concrete, positing the reality of 'Many' as constituting a part of the splendour of the 'One'. Brahman is no impersonal 'That', but an intensely personal Deity to be approached, cognized and adored. The Divine Reality is not only infinite Majesty but also infinite Love and Grace. It is this latter aspect that reveals itself as Beauty meant to entrance erring souls to their Divine destiny.

### *Purushartha*

(b) With this idea of the Supreme Reality, Ramanuja's philosophy proceeds to determine the Supreme goal of human life. That goal cannot be happiness conceived in materialist terms which even at its best, is transient and cannot meet all the demands of man's nature which is spiritual. Nor can it be merely the emancipation of the human soul from the association with matter, as envisaged by the dualistic conceptions of reality. It can only be the integration of the finite spirit with the Divine. The essence of evil lies in man's self-alienation from the Supreme, and his final fullness of life and eternal felicity must be in the achievement of union with that Ultimate Spirit. The good in its final analysis must be of the nature of attaining the real, for the real is self-imparting plenitude of being. This identification of the real with the good is a cardinal principle of all the Theistic religions and Idealistic philosophies of the world. What this attainment of or union with Brahman or God is, must be clearly conceived. It is no identity with it

involving the obliteration of the individuality of the finite seeker, for God is not an all-cancelling unity and the individual as such, is no fiction to be dissolved. It is an enrichment of the individual through the vision and ecstatic adoration of the Highest, in all its transcendent glory and immanence. With this indication of the Supreme goal, in the Theo-centric philosophy of Ramanuja, we may try to reconstruct his conception of Sadhana.

## *II. Sastra*

(a) The spiritual aspirant must gather the fundamentals of the requisite philosophical doctrine from the Revelation of Vedantic scriptures augmented by the wisdom of ancient seers in methodical earnestness from preceptors ripe in knowledge and spiritual perception. He has to go over the instructions devoutly received with an open mind without abrogating the exercise of alert and critical re-consideration. It is by this process of live assimilation that he acquires what the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad calls Panditya. Receptivity and critical reflection are both essential for developing maturity of stable conviction. Established in such a steady certainty, he should raise himself to the plane of practice, of planned endeavour, to realise the highest end he has chosen in the light of his vedantic understanding.

(b) The method of practice must be such that all resources of his personality are fruitfully mobilised. The 'whole' man should exert himself to achieve the ideal of the 'wholeness' of life, his ultimate Destiny in God. The proper priorities must be determined among the various aspects of life, so that the right sequence in progression may be adopted. For meeting this requirement, Ramanuja finds in the Gita the fullest guidance. It is the central classic in the Vedantic tradition, working out the pathways to God—the ways of action, contemplation and devotion. The three Yogas, Karma, Jnana and Bhakti form the threefold bequest of the Gita and luckily all the Schools of Vedanta accept them, though they may vary in their elucidation, alignment and relative evaluation. In fact,

whatever the dialectical controversies among themselves, all the schools of Vedanta exhibit a remarkable measure of agreement in their acceptance of the three pathways and in their absolute acknowledgement of the authority of the Gita. This is a matter of capital significance.

### *III. Karma-Yoga*

Karma-yoga or the pathway of action is one of the unique teachings of the Gita. Visishtadvaita elucidates Karma-yoga remarkably well, maintaining fidelity to the Gita and at the same time elaborating it in the details of application. Action as such cannot be given up. Giving it up may involve a false sense of renunciation, may even be spiritually injurious; and even the most illumined aspirant must exert himself in humanitarian action for the welfare of the world in a spirit of dedication to God. A total renunciation of action, even if possible, must be on the ground that it binds the agent in mundane life by virtue of its consequences. But such an estimate of action is philosophically wrong, for what binds is the motive behind the action and not the outer actualization of the motive. For that matter, even the abandonment of action, if it proceeds from motivating delusion and self-interest, can be a source of Karmic bondage. What matters fundamentally is the spirit and motive behind both action and non-action. The Gita advocates and Ramanuja accepts wholly the life of action bereft of self-centred purpose and inspired by the consecrating spirit of worship. The action in the context must be given the widest possible interpretation. It is ritualistic action, socially necessary action enjoined by scriptural ethics and also the entire range of what is regarded normally as secular work. The basic principle informing all this action should be self-abnegation or the elimination of the assertion of the ego in the life of action. Ramanuja analyses three aspects of this egolessness in the ideal action. The Sadhaka should not think of himself as the doer or agent of action but look upon God as the agent-executing it. The action itself should not be looked upon as one's own, as pertaining to his own life, but as something that forms part of

Divine action. The fruits of the action, whatever they be, must be dedicated to God with no stain of self-centred expectation. When an aspirant reaches this level of active life, some transformation takes place in his inward personality. The contemplative element in him starts unfolding. What hindered the manifestation of this element was the retribution to his former self-centred deeds. When the effects of such deeds are nullified by this phase of Karma-yoga, its natural potency starts working and the new life of Jnana-yoga is facilitated.

#### *IV. Jnana-Yoga*

That a life of virtue for its own sake generates the upward trend towards spiritual illumination is one of the laws enunciated in the Gita and that law forms a part of Ramanuja's teachings concerning Sadana. That knowledge or Jnana cannot emerge independent of Karma, and Karma, however exalted cannot terminate in itself, is the import of that law. Jnana-Yoga emerges out of the fullness of Karma-Yoga. Jnana is an ambiguous term. It may mean either intellectual understanding based on scriptures or reflection based thereon or a life of contemplation directed on the theme so understood. It is this latter practice of knowledge that is called Jnana-Yoga, the pathway of knowledge. Mere understanding of spiritual truth should in fact precede even Karma-Yoga. This Jnana-Yoga is the steady directing of thought on the nature of the self or the inmost principle of one's own personality. This step is necessary for leading up to the immediate and intuitive discovery of what the Atman, the individual spirit, is in its essence. Such a basic self-knowledge only can ensure the determination of the value or the goal that could bring abiding and complete fulfilment to the self. Self-knowing is the presupposition of the move for developing the self to its utmost fullness of being. The self wrongly identified can only engender pursuits doomed to disillusionment in the very moment of their triumph.

Now what are the fruits of this Jnana-Yoga or what are the focal points of its discovery? Visishtadvaita lists three truths as the subject-matter of Jnana-Yoga.

The first of these truths that the Jnana-Yogin realises, in the specific sense that he directly apprehends, is that the fundamental nature of his self consists of knowledge,—knowledge comprehending in itself all forms of consciousness. The self knows itself by immediate self-awareness and is the centre of the consciousness of all else in existence. It is both Jnana-swaroopa and Jnana-gunaka. From this follows the immediate realisation of the second truth that it is radically other than the non-self, one of the configuration of the non-self being the body with which the self is mistakenly identified in mundane consciousness. The self's nature as knowledge and its consequent distinction from all that is physical or non-self, become immediate certainties for the Jnana-yogin. The third truth that the Jnana-yogin discovers by way of spiritual perception is that his self is virtually a non-entity when it lives unto itself but attains its proper abundance of life and intrinsic worth only when it offers itself to the Supreme. In such contribution of itself to the Divine soul of souls it reaches the plenitude of authentic being and totality of self-fulfilment. It can covet itself only when it has succeeded in such self-dedication.

This last discovery inaugurates the Yoga of Bhakti, for Bhakti is the finding of absolute joy in offering oneself to the Deity. Ramanuja declares that with this three-fold self-perception,—that the self is of the essence of knowing, that it transcends the perishing and insentient physical system and that it gains value in so far as it consciously makes itself an offering to the Divine spirit—the high pathway of Bhakti emerges spontaneously into being. (Gita-XII, II).

#### *V. Bhakti-yoga*

(a) According to Ramanuja there are three ingredients in Bhakti. There is the factor of devout contemplation on God called traditionally Upasana, which arises out of the understanding derived from Vedantic study and reflection thereon. This is the intellectual element in Bhakti. There is the factor of love, Preeti or Sneha, which is such that without the object of love, the subject feels himself withering away. This factor

transforms contemplation into a passionate yearning of devotion. So Bhakti is an intense emotion with its base in contemplation. It is Dhyana maturing into Anuraga. There is a further element. The devotee—this is the nearest English word for a Bhakta—does not seek to appropriate the object of his devotion but longs to be appropriated by it and to be freely utilised in its service. This is Seva or Kainkarya. In its richness of content the attitude and process of Bhakti involve all the dimension of the seeker's personality.

(b) This full-fledged Bhakti, at once contemplative and emotional, issuing in dynamic self-dedication to God, constituting the Sadhana for the individual's attainment of the Supreme must be sharply distinguished from lower forms of Bhakti. For instance, it is not the same as the frenzy of momentary emotion uninformed by philosophical insight. Nor is it the scrupulous observance of the rituals of worship. The Gita distinguishes it from the secular practice of devotion for purposes of worldly ends, such as temporal gains and relief from temporal afflictions. Nor is it the devotionism engaged in for purposes of spiritual enlightenment. These are instances of instrumental Bhakti which endeavour to use God as a means for ends other than God. The enlightened and liberating Bhakti is attachment to God both as a means and end, in fact, as all-in-all for the devotee. Such a devotee is described as Nitya-Yukta and Eka-Bhakti, for to him "Vasudeva is Sarvam". It is to be noted that this conception of Bhakti lifts it above mere Jnana and is not to be ranked as something that falls below rational spirituality. It is not something doled out for the consumption of the masses but the very height in which philosophical enlightenment reaches its fruition. The devotee of this level is justly praised "Sa Mahatma Sudurlabhah",—he is a great-souled one and exceedingly rare.

(c) Ramanuja lays down in clear terms some special characteristics of this level of Bhakti. As it advances and matures it sheds its character of mere contemplativeness and takes on the character of vision or perception. God becomes an object of immediate experience. This is the meaning of the

description of it as *pratyakshavagamam*<sup>1</sup> and the declaration “*Nivasishyasi Mayyeva Ata Urdhvam Na Samsayah*”<sup>2</sup>. Further it is a self-rectifying and self-enriching process. Faults of the devotee are corrected”<sup>3</sup> and a tiny stream of devotion swells into a mighty Ganga.”<sup>4</sup> It is not an arduous and cheerless journey to be gone through with endurance, impelled by the hope of the prospective joys of the destination. The Gita describes it as ‘*Susukham Kartum*’ and Ramanuja appropriately elucidates it ‘as of the nature of joy throughout’. In fact it is so joyous a *Sadhana*, that it ceases to be a *Sadhana* but becomes the *Siddhi* itself. The Goal has to recommend itself, as it were, on the ground that it is a continuation and amplification of *Bhakti* itself. The weightiest interpreters of Ramanuja are decisive on the point. *Bhakti* itself annihilates the ‘negative hallucination’ of Godlessness, the essence of human bondage, and covers the soul of man with the effulgence and bliss of the Supreme Presence. No wonder Ramanuja opens his *Sri Bhashya* with a straightforward prayer for *Bhakti*.

(d) We have to bring in at this stage the crowning factor in the progress of *Sadhana*. The efficacy of *Sadhana* lies in winning the grace of God, which ultimately constitutes the liberating force. Human effort attains perfection in inviting the eternal compassion (*Daya*) of God to take on the form of grace (*Prasada*). This, the Divine initiative, is the *Siddhopaya*, the eternally existing resource for the liberation of the finite soul. All that the latter builds up by way of *Bhakti*, on the foundation of *Karma* and *Jnana*, is called *Sadhyopaya*, whose utmost potency culminates in invoking the *Siddhopaya* into its effective operation. That this human initiative is also necessary is due to the fact that the resulting perfection must be a self-sought Self-fulfilment and not imposition by an external force. Inviolability of personality is an essential basis of all realization of value. But the final attainment is principally the gift of the Divine. *Sadhana* is not so much an achievement of the goal as an achievement of the worthiness for it. The redemptive grace of God in all its immensity and expansive force is kept in an uncomfortable check, as it were, not by a positive counter force

but by the negative factor of a gap in receptive worthiness. When the gap is filled up, the grace liberates itself in all its boundless force and abundance. Ramanuja mentions, in all his philosophical writings, the condition that marks the ripeness of worthiness.<sup>5</sup> When the devotee rejoices over and cherishes the state of Bhakti itself,—synthesis of contemplation, love and service of God,—as if it were the final attainment of the blessed state of Mukti itself, almost diluting the fascination for it, then has he reached the climax of worthiness to receive the final visitation. This high valuation of the preparatory experience ensures the valuation of the emergent final state. God chooses to reveal himself to him, to whom, such a revelation is an object of Supreme loving. The devotee by his intensity of absorption in the practice of Bhakti ‘elects’ to be ‘elected’ by God for the consummation of his Quest for the fullest attainment of Him.

(e) It is to be noted that the Sadhyopaya, by way of Bhakti is just a factor accessory to the substantive factor of Divine grace in the process of man’s redemption. But still it is an indispensable requirement. What if the aspirant realizes that he is incompetent to fulfil this requirement? Either he may find himself unable to take to the pathway of Bhakti or if he is already in it, he may find his practice of it inadequate. In such a situation he has to appeal to the Siddhopaya, Divine grace itself, to initiate or perfect this preparatory precondition of worthiness and then crown it with the desired grace. Thus grace will enter into the composition of the preparatory and accessory equipment and then act in response to it. There is grace forming a part of the human endeavour and there is the final grace rewarding this endeavour. This appeal for initiating and perfecting the human side of the undertaking to call into action the principal liberating force of Divine grace, has a definite nature of its own. It is designated Prapatti or Saranagati, following the Gita, surrender to the Divine, accompanied by a prayerful appeal, confession of helplessness, complete faith in the saving potency of God and resolve to conform to Divine dispensation and to renounce all that is contrary thereto. The central item

in this complex approach is surrender. Now surrender may mean the acknowledgement that one belongs to God inalienably in the status of an adjectival embodiment. This is named 'Swarupa-Samarpana'. It may also mean dedication of all the fruits of Spiritual life to the giver Himself. This is called Phala-samarpana. The two go together as in Karma-yoga. But in the present context it specifically means the surrender of one's spiritual responsibility and burden to God. It is appropriately named Bhara-samarpana, or Bhara-Nyasa, or Bhara-Nikshepa. The man of Bhakti with his equipment enriched by this element of surrender to fill gaps in it, accomplishes the full Bhakti constitutive of his worthiness for the redemptive grace that lifts him to complete fulfilment.

#### *VI. Prapatti-Yoga*

It is a unique doctrine of Visishtadvaita that Prapatti can itself function as the sole, all-sufficing and unfailing means of release. The resort to surrender can wholly replace Bhakti, pushing up Bhakti itself into the realm of the goal sought. The concept of the end is enlarged thereby and submission to the Divine for purposes of filling the role of the Sadhyopaya also in preparation for the grace that is the Siddhopaya, may become the entire Sadhana of the aspirant. Grace is the only strength available to the unworthy and that is to be won through a total relinquishing of the self's burdens to the care of the almighty mercy of God who is to be both the means and end in the situation. Human initiative, so necessary for Godward progress, terminates itself in this final exercise of itself in surrendering all initiative to God. Economising the human initiative to this minimal extent of the first step, does justice to the requirement that man's co-operativeness is essential for the redemptive activity of God. Leaving the rest of the work in its entirety to God secures maximum efficacy by virtue of His all-knowing power and infinite mercy. This is a surer, quicker and more potent way.

Questions naturally arise at this stage. Why does not Visishtadvaita straightway advocate the way of Prapatti which

is superior in so many respect? Why does it burden itself with the arduous and long-drawn-out way of Bhakti? Or why not adopt Bhakti itself with all its complements inclusive of subsidiary Prapatti as the way, the sole way, to the Divine? Why this twofold scheme of Sadhana?

The problem is fundamental and it has to be faced by some important elucidations.

(a) The two pathways mingle with each other a great deal and do not present hard and exclusive alternatives. In the first place, Bhakti, for its full development requires supplementation from Prapatti both in the beginning and at the end. Its inadequacies are to be made good by Prapatti. Secondly Bhakti totally divested of Prapatti is impossible. Even its means, such as Karmayoga and Jnana-yoga stand in need of Prapatti in crucial stages. Prapatti, in its turn, springs from Bhakti, for it is impelled by aspiration for God-realization and this surely is an aspect of Bhakti. The goal that Prapatti endeavours to actualise is the joyful vision of God issuing in loving service, truly a state of Bhakti. Both in the aspiration from which it springs and in the conception of that of which it is the means, Bhakti finds a firm lodgement. So Bhakti as an impetus and as part of the goal sought enters into the pathway of Prapatti.

(b) But the scheme of the two pathways is valid and indispensable. When a Sadhaka feels in all the integrity of his soul that he has not the needed knowledge or practical ability to pursue Bhakti, or cannot await its slow and prolonged maturations or is keenly aware that the qualifications prescribed for Bhakti in the Sastras are not there in him, he should choose the other way. Choice in that direction is an imperative for him. Similarly, a devotee who realizes, in all spiritual honesty and not in false arrogance, that he has the knowledge, ability, and the qualifications for the practice of Bhakti and also enjoys the felicity of devotion to the extent of being free from the agonizing impatience for emancipation, does well in being drawn to the way of Bhakti, both by duty and inclination.

(c) One would expect in a position such as this, a gradation of these two ways of Sadhana in terms of one being higher

and the other lower. But the paradox is that such a grading does not obtain in Visishtadvaita. Neither of the two is a Hina-yana, the other being exalted above it. The simple logic of the distinction is that each is the highest for the level and class of aspirants who can advance through it. Considered in their intrinsic nature each possesses a superiority of its own. Prapatti is, no doubt, meant for the inferior Sadhaka. But his Sadhana itself is not inferior. The inadequacies and privations of the aspirant make his redemption wholly the work of God and as such it far surpasses any possible achievement of any Sadhaka by himself with his paltry and uncertain capabilities. The plenitude that God bestows shares His infinity. Bhakti in its turn involves no doubt a greater extent and proportion of man's accomplishment. But in its heights it ceases to be just an instrumental value and transforms itself in to the very attainment sought after. Bhakti at its climax is Mukti itself; or Mukti, it seems, bears the appellation Bhakti in its inception.

So we have a valid distinction without a differential evaluation.

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# *Ramanuja on Truth and Error*

## I

Epistemological issues are fundamental to every School of conscious and critical philosophizing and it is so in Ramanuja's System of thought also. His special direction of epistemological thinking is substantially governed by his analysis of the knowledge-situation and it is necessary to focus somewhat on that analysis.

(a) For Ramanuja knowing or Jnana is something that belongs to a self or conscious personality. It is a process that obtains within a centre of conscious being and cannot take place outside the circle of such a being. This proposition at once puts Ramanuja's thought in opposition to a materialistic or naturalistic treatment of knowledge and also to a philosophical position for which the self or personality or self-conscious substratum is a superfluity if not a contradiction. The 'ego' in the ethica sense may imply degradation but the metaphysical 'Ego' in the sense of a self-conscious spiritual subject is the necessary foundation of the knowing process. It will take us too far from our focal theme to go into the Ramanujite refutation of the theories of knowledge which discard the notion of a self. The integrative function involved in knowing depends on the unity of the self and there is no contradiction in the notion of a self aware of itself. The subject and object of this awareness may be identical in the cognitive realm though such an identity is impossible in the realm of action. There is no 'Atmani Kriya Virodha' in Jnapti.

(b) We have to go further. For Ramanuja the self is self-aware and it also exercises awareness in relation to actual and possible entities other than itself. This object-oriented awareness is named Dharma-bhuta-Jnana which manifests itself in the self in its epistemic interaction with the rest of existence. It is impossible to do away with this adjectival consciousness in

addition to and based on the substantive self-consciousness constitutive of the self.

The expedient of regarding it as a mistake, as a lapse, as an *Adhyasa*, born of the mixing of the self and the non-self is unworkable according for Ramanuja. Such a mistaken self-identification can occur only in cognitive consciousness directed object-wards and cannot be its source. That intellection is a degradation of the *Atman* is a position totally opposed to Ramanuja's ways of thinking. The position that he takes rules out the postulate of an original error as laying at the bottom of all cognitive operations. Knowing is an authentic expression of the metaphysical self. To be a self is to know oneself and to carry the potentiality of knowing the rest of reality. Whether there is any reality or realities other than the self is a question that has to be faced in the sequel and not prejudged in the account of consciousness itself.

(c) That knowing is a process in the self and that it brings to the awareness of the self the objective sphere of existence is the realistic understanding of the situation. But the position is seriously challenged by subjective Idealism such as that of *Vijnana-Vada* in later Buddhism and Berkeley in European thought. Ramanuja is strongly critical of this trend of thought. He goes over the list of the standard arguments in favour of subjectivism and finds all of them fallacious. Perhaps the most decisive criticism may be stated briefly. If all knowing is confined to the knowing of the subject itself without revealing any objective reality to the subject, the thesis propounding that position is also purely subjective lacking all probative force. Pure subjectivism, as a philosophy, is self-destructive. The contention that all knowing is vitiated at its very source, being founded on a misconception or *Adhyasa*, puts the effect at the root of the cause, as hinted in the elucidation of *Dharma-bhuta-Jnana*.

Nor does Ramanuja subscribe to the Representative theory of perception, which has a tendency to lead to subjectivism. That theory is adopted in *Soutrantika* Buddhism, *Sankhyayoga* and *Advaita Vedanta*. Ramanuja finds these accounts of perception unsound and thereby denies to subjectivism one of its

conventional supports. Thus knowledge is the bringing to the knowing self an object or objects and that not by any mediation by a mental image or representation but through an immediate apprehension. It is a direct intellectual appropriation of the relevant objective situation.

(d) Ramanuja insists that knowing an object is the discernment of its distinguishing characteristics. To know an entity is to know it in its distinctiveness, such that to miss the qualitative uniqueness is failure of knowledge. What happens in error is precisely this privation in understanding and the consequent misattribution of the wrong characteristics. In the correction of errors, there is a recovery in the sense of the discernment of the right distinguishing properties and the elimination of the misattribution. Understanding right or wrong consists in attribution of some property or function to the object of the understanding in the context and the right understanding means the attribution of the authentic particulars to the datum in question. There can be no apprehension or cognition of an entity which is not also a characterisation of it in terms of some predicate. There can be no predicateless judgement or no indeterminate apprehension. This is a fundamental implication of all cognitive operations according to Ramanuja.

We may sum up the factors involved in the knowledge-situation. Knowledge is what takes place in the knowing self in relation to an object possessed of differentiating characteristics.

## II

Now the next question is as to what constitutes truth and what is the nature of the opposite. Truth is the fidelity of thought to the nature of things. When thought and its object are in perfect concordance, we have truth or when we grasp reality as it is in itself we have attained truth which is the goal of understanding. The Sanskrit word for this ideal condition is *Prāmānya*.

There are two alternative ways of conceiving the relation between thinking, or the power through which knowledge is to be attained and the object of which knowledge is sought.

Thought and reality may be taken as apart from each other, so that some special technique is to be adopted for making thought achieve conformity to reality. This is a view favoured by a number of Schools of Indian philosophy. Such a conception is named *Paratah Prāmānya-vāda*, meaning that thought achieves objectivity through some aids and processes external to itself. The other view holds that thought, in so far as it is itself, unvitiated by falsifying external factors enjoys a natural harmony with reality. Truth is natural and inherent to it, while falsity is an artificial and contingent perversion. This is the view of '*Swatah Prāmānya-veda*' and all the Schools of Thought devoted to the *vedas*, the *Meemamsa* and *Vedanta* of all types advance this standpoint. It is to this alternative that Ramanuja subscribes. There is the further point that the recognition of truth is not to be brought about externally but that the claim to truth is inherent in all thinking. The familiar difficulties encountered in western epistemologies with regard to correspondence, coherence and the pragmatic criterion are not so conspicuous in Indian discussions though the principles they embody are sufficiently incorporated in them. For instance, correspondence may be discredited as a criterion but it does enter into the notion of objectivity. Coherence constitutes a measuring rod to determine whether thought is functioning according to the innate law of its nature or is contaminated by external factors tending to falsification. The pragmatic test of verification through action is part of the coherence-criterion as in *Nyaya-vaisheshika*. But the fundamental principle on the theory of *Swatah Pramanya* is that thought allowed to work itself out according to its innate nature achieves the ideal of truth. On the contrary view, thought would have to be externally coerced and denatured considerably in order to acquire the quality of truth. This line of thinking does not have to go far to land in Universal Nihilism. That position is decisively rejected by Ramanuja. The emergent conclusion may be roughly designated a '*Natural Realism*' of thought.

## III

This Natural Realism is no easy position to take. Our judgement concerning a matter of fact might meet confrontation with a contradictory judgement and it is such a situation that necessitates suspension of the initial acceptance of the original judgement. In other words, contradiction is the primary root of all reconsiderations. It may be that the contradictory judgement appears triumphantly more plausible or the two alternative possibilities may set up the predicament of doubt. Thus the problem of error comes up for consideration. It becomes inevitable in the progress of thought that decision has to be taken as to what is true and what is an error between competing affirmations. Progress towards truth has to pass through rejection of errors. Indian epistemology engages itself a great deal in determining the nature of error not in the psychological but in its metaphysical aspect. The precise question is concerning the ontological status of the content of the erroneous cognition. A radical School of Buddhiism took the content as merely non-existent, not a difficult position to take for a standpoint for which all thinking is a transaction with unrealities. Yet another school opined that error is just a fictitious externalisation of what is simply inner ideation. It is conception posing as perception. For a school of subjective Idealism no other explanation is possible of even valid cognitions. Nearer the commonsense Realism is a Meemamsa view that error is just failure of discrimination between like factors in the objective situation and also between a memory-image and perceptual datum. The most natural alternative seems to be that error is a transposition, a simple process of misidentification of the immediate datum as what is a fact elsewhere, in a different experiential context. The Advaitic explanation arises as a result of a review of these competing doctrines and puts down the content of error as what cannot be allocated to the realm of the real or the unreal and therefore is indeterminable by way of ontological categorization. So much is the general background of Ramanuja's thought on the Question.

Ramanuja distils out of this dialectical situation a considered moral that all these theories of error are ultimately reducible to Anyatha-Khyati, that error consists of apprehending the datum otherwise than what it is in actuality. Even the ontologically indeterminable, Anirvachaneeya, is grasped as Nirvachaneeya, if it is an authentic case of error.

This is the first phase of Ramanuja's thinking on the Question. The Second and more thorough going proposition that he advances is that there is no such thing as a sheer error, a presentation of what is unreal as such. He attempts an account of error without admitting that the content of the erroneous cognition is unreal either wholly or even partially. The old problem of conflicts and contradictions in thought necessitating option and rejection re-appears at once. He faces the situation fully. In his conception all cognition has a real content. There is no such thing as a fictitious judgement. A judgement gives rise to its contradictory when its content is an inadequate extract of the real. The function of contradiction is to reveal this inadequacy and that way contradiction has a dynamic role in the progress of thought. It establishes that the contradicted thought has been infected with some flaws and thus commands only a fragmentary grasp of the real. The contradiction discharges this function particularly by generating pragmatic frustration. When the original judgement is condemned this way, the rectification that ensues is not its nullification but its amplification with all the necessary supplements. Errors are there in life, in Vyavahara but from a Paramarthika point of view there is no apprehension of the unreal. Ramanuja goes over all the typical forms of illusion rather exhaustively and works out his thesis of Satkhyati in terms of the Science of his times and the principle can withstand modernisation of treatment. The explanation is a fulfilment of the doctrine of Swatah-Pramanya and indicates that thought when it errs is just a fragmentary truth unaccompanied by the awareness of its fragmentariness. This awareness is brought home forcefully by the emergence of contradiction, whose function is to exhibit the inadequacy in question and to urge

that the thought in the context is not true to its natural power of illuminating the real and that the power stands impeded by external factors or *Dusta-Karana*. The impediments are obstructive and not projective in nature. They bring about curtailment of cognition and not the cognition of the unreal. In essence this explanation maintains that there are no errors of commission and all human errors are negative hallucinations.

It is worthwhile putting together the chief ideas of Ramanuja on error.

1. He insists that all accounts of error admit an element of truth in its core.
2. They all admit an aspect of omission in error.
3. They go beyond this aspect and posit an aspect of commission. Ramanuja refuses to concede this additional aspect and argues that the omission in the context fully understood is seen to include in itself the commission also.
4. The omission is due to defects in the cognitive system and they are obstructive and not projective.
5. The presence of defects is made known by contradiction including pragmatic frustration.
6. In the final analysis all errors are negative hallucinations based on a fragmentary apprehension of the real.
7. The remedy for errors is not their cancellation but a completion of their intent.

The theory is not without great parallels in the history of philosophy. It is found in essentials in Spinoza's epistemology. In British Philosophy Bradley almost arrives at it in his attempt to reconcile error with the Absolute. G. F. Stout in his famous essay on 'Error' presents it in principle. The realist, Sheldon, declares it as his deliberate view. Among Indian Schools, the Kashmir School of Saivism propounds it with the label of 'Apurna-Khyāti'. There are many more parallels. May be Ramanuja's version carries greater thoroughness of technical elaboration.

## IV

With this characterisation of error as inadequate apprehension we gain the starting point for a survey of the evolution of human intelligence.

It gets initiated in the perception of the real in Error itself. Contradictions release the erring intelligence into the wider domain of perceptions. The law of progression is self-enlargement through coherence. The first rudimentary level of perception is Nirvikalpa Pratyaksha, not to be taken as literally 'indeterminate' but determinate within the confines of a single individual datum. This grows into Savikalpa Pratyaksha wherein the datum, by virtue of shared determinations, is appropriately cognised as belonging to a kind or group of entities. The next level of enlarged consciousness is what is named Anumana or Tarka, in which the implications of the properties qualifying the individual entities are understood and carried out in terms of grounds and consequents. The range of the objective field is enlarged thereby almost immeasurably. To resist this expansion is to court contradiction. But reason forming this level of understanding has its own limitations. It raises questions which it cannot answer with its own resources.

The central question demanding answer is about ultimate reality, the reality holding within its compass all the manifold of existence. Reason cannot suppress the question and cannot furnish its answer. Hence intelligence presses upwards to another level of understanding and this is named Sastrha, the Revelation embodied in vedantic scriptures. This Revelation is looked upon as completing empirical thought and not as its annulment. It is a Pooraka and not a Bādhaka. In the interpretation of the Revelation also the law of comprehension works irresistably. There are upanishadic declarations affirming the transcendence of the ultimate principle, appropriately designated Brahman. There are again texts proclaiming the oneness of Brahman with all that is. The two wings of testimony are brought together into a fusion and the harmonising and enriching concept of Brahman as both transcendent and

immanent is presented in some crucial dialogues and propositions of the upanishads. It is the last type of upanishadic message that Ramanuja takes as comprehending within itself all that the basic revelation signifies. Ramanuja maintains that the understanding just born of Revelation is *Apara-vidya*, or lower knowledge. The thinker should proceed on the basis of it to develop intuitive realisation, *Para-vidya* or *Sakshatkara*, which is immeasurably wider and deeper than scriptural knowledge. Understanding should mature into vision. At the height of this vision he realises that he has not yet reached the destination of his pilgrimage. That is the meaning to be attached to 'Neti, Neti', 'Yatovacho Nivartante, Aprāpya Manasā Saha' 'Avijnātam Vijānatām, Vijnātam Avijānatām'. There are still unconquered heights and immensities of vision.

Such is the ascent of intelligence in its progress in the Kingdom of Truth.

## *The Heritage of Sri Vedanta Desika*

1. While it is an established historical fact that Sri Vedanta Desika is one of the most brilliant and many-sided personalities in the mediaeval epoch of Indian Philosophy, an adequate appreciation of the full scope and quality of his achievement is yet awaiting articulation. Homage, there has been in the past and is possible at all times in the spirit of humble devotion but tribute proceeding from comprehension is rendered particularly difficult by the baffling immensity and towering height of the theme. Something by way of an approach to the necessary task is all that can be attempted and in the benevolent cult of bhakti, attempt is often counted as performance. Let us endeavour to make out in meagre outline the vast heritage of Sri Vedanta Desika.

2. Poetry and philosophy may have an underlying kinship of spirit, but in the actual history of cultures they have rarely combined in the same personality. In Sri Vedanta Desika this combination has actualized itself in a phenomenal manner. Poetry came naturally to him and every variety of it from the epic to the lyric sprang forth from his genius embodying his God-intoxicated inspiration. There have been philosophical poets all the world over, who took over a pre-formed system of philosophy and Theology and gave it a poetic shape. Not so was Sri Vedanta Desika, whose contribution to philosophy is no less profound and creative than his poetry. The striking fact is that Sri Vedanta Desika is the most philosophical of our poets and the most poetical of our philosophers. His poetry is no casual refinement of his philosophical writing nor is his philosophy a matter of occasional flashes of accidental insight. His philosophy is systematic and rigorous and his poetry is vast and profound. May be the idea of God, whose elaboration was the sole mission of his philosophic labours, called forth an

aesthetic presentation and Sri Vedanta Desika fully rose to the occasion and his natural poetic powers translated the aesthetic possibilities into an astonishing body of highest poetry.

3. Sri Vedanta Desika was a devoted follower of Sri Ramanuja. His bhakti to Sri Ramanuja was second only to his bhakti to God. He was charmed by his master's style and was convinced that the philosophy propounded by Sri Ramanuja was perfect. He records in happy retrospect that all his youth was spent fruitfully in the enjoyment of Sri Ramanuja's works. Naturally, he chose as a part of his mission in life to elucidate the works of the Acharya. Hence, we have his Tatparya-Chandrika. Tattwa-Teeka, Adhikarana-Saravali and Gadya-Bhashya. There are commentators and commentators. There are some who write interpretations of ancient works to foist their own independently formed views on an authoritative text without furnishing aids to understand it as it is. There are again others who mechanically supply verbal explanations, overlooking the apparent gaps, redundancies, discrepancies in the original, which an abler commentator would remove by a creative amplification. Sri Vedanta Desika is supreme as a commentator. He is unfailing in solving textual difficulties. By bringing out the 'architectonic' of the original he supplies the necessary links, reconciliations and justifying amplifications. He shirks no polemics and carries on no discussion beyond the requirements of the actual context. He steadily focusses attention on the issues that the original writer is solving and confirms the solutions by a thorough review of the entire situation. His conclusions acquire the quality of finality as he puts into use all the relevant reflections of the past. There is integrity and thoroughness in substantiation. The words of Sri Ramanuja come to command all the amplitude of their intended import in the masterly exposition of Sri Vedanta Desika. The Tatparya-Chandrika is one of the greatest commentaries ever written in the history of Indian Philosophy. While Sri Ramanuja is the focal point of Sri Desika's interpretative writings, the Isa Upanishad, the devotional lyrics of Yamun and his short gist of the Gita also receive Sri Desika's interpreta-

tion with the obvious intent of strengthening the philosophical position of Sri Ramanuja. Several important passages of scriptures, the compositions of Alwars and pithy utterances of older Visistadwaitins receive authentic elucidation. The body of inherited teaching gathers volume, full intelligibility and vindication through this dedicated labour of interpretation.

4. The system of thought set forth in the works of Sri Ramanuja was stabilized and consolidated by the commentaries. But, Sri Vedanta Desika seems to have realized that independent and constructive statement of the central doctrines was also necessary for completer and convincing presentation of the system. The Nyaya-Vaiseshika writers had standardized the mode of such treatment, supplementing the commentaries. Sri Vedanta Desika undertook to expound Visistadwaita in this independent, systematic and constructive manner. His Nyaya-Siddhanjana works out the metaphysics of Visistadwaita, while Nyaya-parisuddhi presents the logic and epistemology of the school. The entire philosophy is cast into this new and non-interpretative mould, exemplifying and considerably improving the standard expository methodology sanctioned by the Nyaya-Vaiseshika practice. This method is eminently suited for displaying the vista of thought in all its magnificence and enough justice can be done to details implicit in the commentaries. Progressive working out of thought in a constructive and logically satisfying way is rendered possible in this method. Sri Vedanta Desika's greatest achievement in this direction is his Tattwa-Mukta-Kalapa, which combines in itself metaphysics, epistemology and axiology, placing all the tenets of the school in their appropriate setting and builds up an all-inclusive edifice.

Nothing is left wanting, and there is ordered presentation and every step is taken after rigorously reasoned consideration. The text is elucidated and richly supplemented by Sri Desika's own commentary, appropriately styled Sarvarthasiddhi. The original with this commentary is the fullest statement of Sri Ramanuja's philosophy with all the unity of design and elaborate execution of details employing all the technicalities of Indian philosophy at its best. Perhaps this is the most difficult

of Sri Vedanta Desika's works as it dispenses with no necessary technicality and logical thoroughness.

5. Sri Vedanta Desika penetrated to the essentials of all schools of Indian thought and has subjected them to a critical review in many of his works. But an entire treatise in Tamil is devoted to this theme. It combines the rare virtues of objectivity of presentation and the spirit of critical inquiry. Such a survey and criticism do not have many illustrations in Indian Philosophy.

Sri Vedanta Desika rendered signal service to three disciplines. The Purva-Mimamsa as philosophy chose to be satisfied with a narrow metaphysics, though it formulated very sound principles of Vedic exegesis. Nyaya instituted very valuable inquiries into problems of knowledge but allied itself to a finally untenable system of ontology. Yoga signifying the technique of contemplation fused itself with Sankhya and an incomplete Theism. Sri Vedanta Desika freed Mimamsa from its semi-naturalistic metaphysics extricated logic and epistemology from the untenable Nyaya metaphysics and liberated Yoga from the Sankhya-Yoga mould. Truly, vedic exegesis, theory of knowledge and the theory of spiritual contemplation found their way back to the grand Upanishadic thought and realized their full possibilities in a metaphysical context conducive to their natural development. This analysis and liberation is worked out in many treatises. Purva-Mimamsa is subjected to this transformation and recovery in Seswara-Mimamsa; Nyaya is rescued and developed in Nyaya-Parisuddhi and the entire technique of Yoga is incorporated into the path-way of bhakti in the writings on the Gita. On the history of Indian philosophy, we owe to Sri Desika this three-fold service of survey, criticism and reconstruction.

6. We have yet to record appreciation of Sri Vedanta Desika's dialectical masterpiece, the famous Sata-dushbini. Advaitins delighted in polemics, particularly against Nyaya-Vaisheshika pluralism and Realism. They further carried on the destructive refutation disdaining to commit themselves to any positive standpoint as is strikingly illustrated in the celebrated

polemics of Sri Harsha. Sri Vedanta Desika took the initiative away from the dialectical Nihilism and chose to examine the entire philosophy of Advaita, as represented by its principal advocates, like Sankara, Sureswara, Mandana-misra, Vachāspati Prakasatman, Vimuktatman, Sri Harsa and Chitsukhamuni. The work extends to sixtysix chapters and every substantial contention of Advaita is subjected to the most thorough-going examination. Earlier writers in Visistadvaita did have this critical side in their works, but Sri Vedanta Desika confines this work exclusively to negative argumentation. He gathers into his work all the earlier criticism and develops it into a mighty body of destructive dialectics. Only recently attempts are afoot to rebut the criticism. The case against Advaita Vedanta had found never before such powerful utterance and in a later epoch it largely relates to the later writers in Advaita and often scores formal victories in the technical jargon of Naveena Nyaya. Whatever may be the final estimate of the relative merits of the schools of Vedanta, the distinction of marshalling so thorough a discussion of the fundamentals of Advaita goes to Sri Vedanta Desika. Since his time, we might almost say, the system is on the defensive.

7. We now come to a consideration of what constitutes the goal of all the literary activities of the Sri Vedanta Desika. He was principally a devotee of God and to him the object of devotion was the most immediate presence. He had won the vision of the infinite, through a complete surrender of soul. The rapture over flowing that realization gushes forth in unmeasured abundance in the mystical and devotional hymns of Sri Desika. The inspired poetry of the Alwars, the devotional masterpieces embedded in the literature of the Agamas, Puranas and Itihasas and the recorded experiences of Yamuna, Ramanuja Kuresa and Parasara Bhatta, all get re-embodied in the vast body of Sri Desika's devotional compositions, rich in imagery, profound in personal reflection and vibrant with the authenticity of live religious experience. His learning stands subdued in the overwhelming experience of the august presence of the Deity. The God heard about becomes the reality lived in.

With the standpoint thus gained by personal realization, Sri Desika strove to illumine the pathway of the seekers of God in the many manuals he wrote for the guidance of the seekers. The supreme classic in this realm is the Rahasya-traya Sara, an inimitable monument of Sri Desika's compassion to man and devotion to God. No worthier culmination of his literary career is conceivable. The entire body of philosophy and religion stands harnessed to the task of formulating the pilgrim's pathway to God. Man's spiritual ascent, his integration with the Deity and his infinite fulfilment therein are the chief concerns of the treatise. The totality of the teaching is explicated in elucidation of the two primeval Mantras of Sri Vaishnavism and the final message of Sri Krishna in the Gita. The ultimate point of man's supreme endeavour towards God lies in self-surrender, prapatti, and prapatti gets its completest definition in this masterly guide to spiritual life.

8. Sri Vedanta Desika's style, whether in Tamil or Sanskrit, Whether in prose or verse, is a perfect instrument of his genius and mood. He can command utmost simplicity and clarity. He wields the technical terminology of the masters of Nyaya with ease and to high effect. He writes most movingly when he addresses his Deity and speaks of his teachers. He imparts appropriate grandeur to his utterance when he communicates his vision of the Supreme. His polemics always has the attributes of candour, thoroughness, lucidity of argument and lively humour. His convictions are set down in marvellous condensations and are argued out, when necessary, in all requisite elaborations. His words, especially when he discourses on the beauty of God and sweetness of surrender to him, carry joyous peace and the promise of abundance of life. He prayed to the God of Learning to bless him with the gift of speech that could bring ambrosia to the listeners and bring every blessing to those who took refuge in it.

श्रोत्रेषु पुंसाममृतम् क्षरन्ती सरस्वती संश्रितकामधेनुम् ॥

May we not say that the prayer has been granted ?

# *Sri Madhva's System of Vedanta*

## I. Advent

The Vedāntin who promulgated the Dvaita School of Vedānta is Śrī Madhva or Ānanda Tīrtha, who, born in Karnataka, in the present South Kanara district, at Pājaka-kṣetra, during the end of the 12th century, lived for about eighty years, propounding, perfecting and spreading his special school of philosophy by his vigorous writings, debates and personal exposition. He traversed the whole country several times from Badari in the Himālayas down to Rāmeshwaram in the far south establishing his point of view in Vedānta on broad and firm foundations and making extensive conquests of conversion. The system was launched into complete existence by him. His writings received illuminating interpretations from Jayatīrtha of the next generation (1335-1385) and was elaborated through the brilliant polemical writings of Vyāsa-tīrtha (1460-1539). In spite of the lateness of the advent of Dvaita in the philosophical scene in India, its literary output is immense, contributed by these three writers and also a phenomenal number of secondary writers.

## II. Orientation

The Vedāntic school of Sankara styles itself as 'Advaita' meaning that reality is one and without a second and that the individual self or jīva is identical with it. The universe of multiplicity is naturally described as of the nature of 'Māyā' or just phenomenal appearance. The philosophical system of Madhva controverts both these propositions. It upholds the difference between the supreme Reality or Brahman and the individual soul as ultimate and irreducible, and hence has come to be described as 'Dvaita' in antithesis to 'Advaita' and discards the thesis of the un-reality of the external world of matter, plurality and change and hence is also called 'Tatva-

vāda' in antithesis to 'Māyā-vāda'. Its principal philosophical orientation is theistic and it opposes itself to God-denying schools of Naturalism and the world-denying schools of Absolutism. As integral to this theistic standpoint it asserts the basic differences between God and the world of individual souls and matter. The latter two are radically different between themselves and individual souls differ from one another fundamentally. Physical entities are also characterised by plurality. This thesis of pluralism is summed up in the concept of 'panca-bheda' of five-fold difference. As against the idealistic monism of Advaita, Dvaita engages itself in the refutation of idealism and upholds the reality of the external world in its long and intricate dialectical history. This assertion of plurality and realism should not obscure the central direction of Dvaita philosophising. The school passionately advocates the thesis that the Brahman of the Upaniṣads is the supreme reality and that constitutes its profoundest concern. In the context of pluralism and realism, Brahman has naturally to be regarded as a supreme personality, calling for adoration from the finite self. Hence it is a school of Bhakti, of loving devotion to God, on the basis of His absolute metaphysical eminence. A further point in the general characterization of Dvaita, is that it identifies Brahman with Viṣṇu, on the strength of the vedic glorification of that deity and the later religious philosophy of the Itihāsās, purāṇās such as the Bhāgavatam and the celebrated Pañca-Rātra-Agama. In short, the Dvaita of Madhva is a Vaiṣṇava system of Vedāntic theism cast in the mould of Bhakti.

### III. Theory of Knowledge

Befitting a system of philosophy Dvaita has built up a strong edifice of epistemology. It upholds the innate trustworthiness of human understanding in agreement with all schools of Vedic exegesis such as Pūrva-Mimamsā and the other schools of Vedānda. This is signified by the concept of 'Svataḥ-pramāṇya'. When thought is prevented by alien factors, a contingency of human understanding, it deviates into error and

the fact of such deviation is registered by the consequent phenomenon of contradiction. Correction of thought is, therefore to be brought about beyond the bounds of the thought in question and hence the notion of 'parataḥ-aprāmāṇya'. This position paves the way for the assertion of the validity of scriptural testimony independent of external confirmation. The ways of knowing are listed as consisting of perception, inference and testimony. The number of the ways is not inordinately multiplied as in the Mīmāṃsaka schools and Advaita Vedānta and is not reduced illegitimately as in Cārvāka, Buddhism and Vaiśeṣika. The word 'pramāṇa' is taken in two senses, as signifying the process of acquiring knowledge and as also the final product of such a process. Perception is characterized by immediacy of apprehension and arises by the operation of the senses. Along with the usual senses, Dvaita posits a supersense called the 'Sākṣin' which denotes the innate power of observation on the part of the knowing self. This is a unique position in Dvaita and the Sākṣin is the final observer in all cases of cognition, even when the latter are mediate. But by itself, in an unmeditated fashion, it cognizes several varieties such as pleasure and pain, space and time, the basic ignorance of the jīva and its own essential nature. The self is the knower intrinsically and the act of knowing is self-knowing and is also exercised in cognizing entities other than the self. The Realism of the school is worked into this basic epistemological tenet itself. The content or subject of perceptual error has been a problem in all Indian epistemology and Dvaita solves it in a straight forward manner by recognizing error as a misapprehension of the existent as non-existent and the non-existent as existent. In the account of perception, the category of 'indeterminate' perception is done away with as a psychological myth and all perception is determinate. In the treatment of inference the general pattern of Nyāya is adopted with minor variations of detail. The type of overt inference called 'parārthānumāna' is not given any meticulous elaboration. The third pramāṇa, verbal testimony, is elaborately treated in consonance with the general vedāntic practice. The attempt to discredit this source

of knowledge is naturally criticised, as this fulfils the criterion of truth as well as other *pramāṇas*. It is justified on grounds of *Svataḥprāmāṇya*. Within the body of verbal testimony a radical distinction is drawn between human verbal testimony, 'pauruṣeya' and the eternal revelation of the Vedas. The Vedas are not compositions of any person or persons, human or divine. They are the ever-existent embodiment of eternal truth. The Vedas constitute one homogeneous whole with no distinctions of lower and higher wisdom. They are not to be interpreted on ritualistic grounds as was done by the *pūrva Mīmāṃsakās*. They enshrine metaphysical and spiritual knowledge of the highest reality. That reality is cognizable only through the evidence of the Vedas and teaching about it is the supreme and final purport of the Vedas, the *Mahā Tātparya*. In the discernment of this purport care must be exercised and if the right logic of interpretation is adopted it will be seen that the Advaitic elucidation of the *Upaniṣads* has no substance whatever. The Vedic testimony is ably amplified by the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, the *śaṅkara purāṇās* and *śmṛtis* and the *Pancarātra Āgama*. This body of scriptural testimony proclaims in one voice the supreme glory of Viṣṇu.

#### IV. Theory of Reality

The foregoing account of the sources of knowledge leads upto the metaphysics of Dvaita. The foremost metaphysical fact is the Divine Reality, described as Brahman or Viṣṇu. He constitutes the principal theme of Vedānta. His existence is not to be proved by reasoning, for the operational efficacy of the latter cannot rise to that height of truth. He is revealed only by the impersonal and eternal Vedas. Reason aids indirectly in answering spurious adverse ratiocination and in exposing the fallacious character of all antitheistic speculation. He is the supreme existence, pure spirit infinite bliss and the inner paramount soul of all existence. He is sometimes spoken of as attributeless because He transcends all attributes of the character of imperfection. He abounds in infinite and glorious attributes. In Him the cosmos finds its foundation, the sustaining

principle and the final refuge. He conceals himself from the sight of the undevout and blesses with ravishing self-revelation the worshipper. Man's bondage and liberation are to be attributed to His will. There is no bifurcation between the substance and attribute in the nature of God and the principle explanatory of this unity of distincts is named 'Viśeṣa'. God is the only autonomous reality and all other entities are through and through dependent on Him. God brings about the creation of the world, its continuance and its dissolution as the efficient cause. If He were the material cause also, He would share its mutability and corruptions. He operates the universe without losing His transcendence in the process.

The cosmology is somewhat like that of Sāṅkhya, adapted to the powerful theistic setting. The world-order is no 'mere' appearance, for the doctrine of cosmic illusionism is riddled with contradictions. Time, space, matter and causation are all real, grounded in the Divine will. On the vexed question of causation Madhva combines the merits of Satkāryavāda and Asatkāryavāda and propounds the integrated doctrine of Sadasat-kārya-vāda. The pluralistic tendency of Dvaita comes out prominently in its treatment of the Jīva, individual soul. The soul-substance is eternal, uncreated and indestructible, though in its mundane career it is subject to the process of transmigration.

Each soul is unique and irreplaceable. In this context the Dvaita writers refute the critique of the concept of 'difference' started by Maṇḍana Miśra. To exist is to exist uniquely. What does not exist as itself verily does not exist. To apprehend anything is to apprehend it in its uniqueness in general, though the working out of this uniqueness in detail is a matter for the entire range of later relevant experience. Uniqueness is by virtue of positive character and its negative implication comes up in later cognitive acts of differentiation. Difference is one with the essence of anything real and can still be spoken of as the difference 'of' the entity in question by virtue of the metaphysical category of viśeṣa. Dvaita contends that the

Advaita critique of difference does not take note of the metaphysical 'fundament' lying at the base of explicit differentiation. The finite souls are many and they exercise acts of cognition, conation and so on. In the moral sphere, the individual exercises freedom conferred on him by God. This freedom is called 'Dattasvāntṛya'. They are eternal and also dynamic centres of consciousness. There is an unalterable metaphysical hierarchy of the finite souls and their destiny is in conformity to this inherent gradation. This is described as 'Tāratamya'. This special conception involves the notion that some Jīvas are beyond redemption and even in the state of perfection gradation of status and attainment persists. The soul is caught up in the chain of transmigration when it disowns the supreme but by turning to Him in the proper way it works out its emancipation. God-denial is the essence of bondage. The pluralism of Dvaita is not absolute and it looks upon the individual soul as an image, 'pratibimba' of God, in that it is sustained by Him, different from Him and is similar to Him in its spiritual nature of jñāna and ānanda. To rise to an apprehension of the original by way of work, knowledge and love is the pathway to blessedness.

#### V. The Summm bonum

Dvaita conceives of the final goal of finite life in accordance with these metaphysical foundations. It is, in essence, the attainment of God. This attainment does not involve the disappearance of the individual in God-head. It is the full evolution of the individual to the point of a direct experience of God and the consequent bliss of experiential union. The individual in due subordination to his Lord enjoys the ecstasy of communion with Him. All that was brought about by the refusal of God on the part of man is ended herein and He is raised to everlasting perfection. This is merger into the experience of God, neither a merger into Him, nor a restoration of the puruṣa to his absolute isolation.

This consummation is accomplished by God's grace and that is the final redemptive power. That power comes into

operation in response to supreme love, paramabhakti, on the part of the aspirant. This level of bhakti arises out of a comprehension of the majesty of God. This should be no speculative understanding but a 'direct vision', aparokṣa jñāna. This vision, in its turn, is an outcome of devout effort in that direction. This effort passes through three stages, śravaṇa (learning of the scriptures), manana (critical reflection on what has been learnt) and nididhyāsana (meditation on what is intellectually established as true). On the maturation of nididhyāsana, by the grace of God, the direct vision ensues. For this entire process to be possible there are two preliminary requirements. There should be complete renunciation of all other interests (vairāgya) and a devout performance of actions (karma-yoga) ordinary and religious in the spirit inculcated in the Gītā. It can be seen that the grace of God and human bhakti are continuous factors through the entire progress of the soul, and function in ascending levels in accordance with the advance of the aspirant. It should also be emphasised that bhakti in this account is always founded on knowledge, which in itself is facilitated by renunciation and works. The approach in consequence, is an integrated one and overlooks no fundamental aspect of human nature, though ultimacy is accorded to supreme bhakti and the responsive grace of God.

## VI. Historical Influences

The historical effect of this movement in Vedānta is four fold :

(1) It has produced a vast and manifold literature, exegetical and original. Madhva himself produced four comments on the Brahma-Sūtras suiting four types of requirement. Of them the Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya and Anuvyākhyāna occupy a high position. He left two elucidations of the Gītā, the Gītā-Bhāṣya and Tātparya. On the Principal Upaniṣads, he has produced significant commentaries. He wrote an extensive work on the 'Mahābhārata' bringing out its philosophical import substantiating the Dvaita point of view. On some select hymns of the R̥g-Veda he has written something in the nature of a model

commentary. The Bhāgavata purāṇa, has received from him the benefit of a brief and running gloss. If all this is literature of interpretation we have ten basic original expositions called 'prakaraṇa-granthas', of which 'Śrīmad Viṣṇu Tattvavinirṇaya' is the best. He has given a devotional composition addressed to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in his Dvādaśa Stotra. Jayatīrtha is the great commentator of Madhva and his elucidation of Sūtra-Bhāṣya and Anuvyākhyāna, called Tattva-prakāśika and Nyāya-Sudhā are justly famous. Vyāsātīrtha is the greatest polemical writer of the school. His Candrikā, Tarka-tāṇḍava and Nyāyāmṛta are masterpieces of philosophical argument. He was followed by a host of voluminous writers. We may mention Vādirāja, Raghūttama, Rāghavendra in this category. As already remarked the Dvaita literature is truly immense.

(2) The Dvaita school arose and developed in continuous confrontation with Advaita. The greatest Dvaita work which accomplishes a comprehensive refutation of Advaita is Nyāyāmṛta in which all the principal writers and doctrines of Advaita are examined. This work was so conspicuous that the great Madhu, Sūdana-Sarasvati wrote an equally impressive work in refutation of it. This is the celebrated Advaita Siddhi. The polemics has not ended and it is carried on by subsequent Dvaitins and Advaitins. The production of this complex of dialectical literature concerning Advaita is one of the consequences of Dvaita.

(3) In Karnāṭaka, the Dvaita movement passed into the hands of popular Saints, also called Haridāsās, and they have composed a vast body of inspired songs of devotion enriching the literature of bhakti enormously.

(4) It cannot be denied that the Cāitanya movement of Bengal received inspiration from Madhva. The fact is testified to in the writings of Rūpa-gosvāmi and jīva-gosvāmi. That was a powerful spiritual movement in medieval India and to have stimulated it is a point of great credit to Dvaita.

## *Madhva's Theory of Sadhana*

In all the schools of Vedānta, *sādhana* or the method of realizing the highest good is given a prominent place. The Upaniṣads themselves enunciate the principal elements of *sādhana*. The *Gītā* is almost wholly devoted to the formulation of a comprehensive scheme of life calculated to bring about the realization of the chief end of spiritual life. The *Brahma-Sūtra* divides the theme of philosophy into *tattva*, *sādhana*, *purusārtha*, and devotes the whole of the third chapter to a critical ascertainment of the Vedāntic technique of spiritual progress. In what follows, an attempt is made to outline the philosophy of *sādhana* according to Madhva, the founder of the Dvaita system of Vedānta.

### **The Main Elements**

Several factors go to constitute the full system of spiritual discipline and realization. Broadly, we can distinguish the element of grace and human effort. In grace itself, the grace of the *guru* or spiritual preceptor and the grace of God can be distinguished. In human effort, we can distinguish the way of action or *karma*, the way of knowledge or *jñāna*, and the way of *bhakti* or love. In the practical sphere of life itself, a distinction can be made between activity as such and the dispositions and inner attitudes to be cultivated. In what is broadly named *jñāna*, there are at least five phases. There is perceptual knowledge of the popular type and the religious knowledge gathered from the scriptures. Over and above these is rational reflection or intellectual discrimination, evaluating and clarifying the data presented by perception and scripture. Based on these primary sources and their critical scrutiny, the process of devout meditation on the truths so ascertained may arise, through which conviction is transmuted into inward communion, and what is mere mediate knowledge is developed into intense

spiritual life. From all this, the aspirant, it is said, ascends to direct experience or knowledge by vision. This perception, scriptural study, reason, meditation, and the supreme personal realization are all phases of *sāadhanā* in the realm of *jñāna*. *Bhakti* or the way of love is no simple affair. We have to distinguish between the popular emotion so called, unenlightened, utilitarian, and sporadic, and the philosophical adoration of the Supreme. *Bhakti* is the cause of much and also the consequence of much in the process of holy living. Thus it exhibits various phases and manifold potencies. An analysis of at least its principal aspects is called for.

*Sāadhanā* is an organized endeavour by the whole man towards the complete and the highest good which he has in him to attain. Such an endeavour requires the utilization of the resources and faculties in the proper order of priorities and with a right perspective of relative values. It also involves a due appreciation of the lines of mutual dependence among them. A philosophy of realization must clarify these priorities, lines of dependence, and the scale of ascending values. Such a philosophy is offered by Madhva, and our task is to reconstruct it in broad outline.

### The General Framework of the School

The question of *sāadhanā* cannot be discussed without reference to the metaphysical foundation and the ultimate axiological affirmation of the school. For Madhva, Reality consists of a supreme self-determining spiritual power and an order of dependent realities encompassed and sustained by it. The function of metaphysics, according to him, lies in the discovery of the supreme principle named Brahman or Viṣṇu and the delineation of its transcendent perfections. His is a theocentric school of metaphysics. Accordingly, the supreme destiny of man is conceived as the *life in God*. It is the rapturous self-expansion of the finite self in and through the immediate apprehension of the Infinite. It is no self-extinction nor mere self-recovery. It is neither *nirvāṇa* nor *kaivalya*. It is fullness of life in the vision of God, it is the immortality of God-

centred existence. God is the supreme *tattva*, and the attainment of God is the supreme *puruṣārtha*. Naturally, *sādhana* is nothing but the Godward movement of the finite self, the planned endeavour of man to enter the kingdom of God. Within the framework set by this theocentric metaphysics and axiology, Madhva works out his doctrine of *sādhana*.

### The Grace of the Guru

It is appropriate to note at the outset what Madhva says about the place of the *guru* and his grace. To the question as to which is greater between the grace of the *guru* and self-effort, he gives an emphatic reply, saying that the grace of the *guru* is greater in force (commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, III. 3.45). But he hastens to add that the grace of the *guru* is not by itself sufficient. Self-effort is absolutely necessary, though it is not sufficient by itself and not equal in force and efficacy to the grace of the preceptor (*ibid.*). It ought not to be construed that the *guru's* grace is sufficient by itself to accomplish salvation or even enlightenment. In the light of this decisive pronouncement, it becomes impossible to confuse Madhva's attitude with the well-known Christian doctrine of justification by faith and the mediator. Devotion to the *guru* and self-effort in all humility are both essential.

### Adhikarin

*Adhikārin* may be broadly taken in the sense of an aspirant after some higher good, who endeavours after its realization. Madhva classifies *adhikārins* into three types, and the classification sets forth a profound scale of evaluation: 'One who is devoted to the supreme Viṣṇu and engages oneself in studying the sacred texts belongs to the lowest class of *adhikārins*. One who has cultivated dispositions like steadfastness, control of the senses, and equanimity belongs to the middle class of *adhikārins*. One who has realized that the whole world, along with all its goods, lacks substance and permanence, resorts to Viṣṇu alone for refuge, and has renounced all actions belongs to the highest class of *adhikārins*' (*ibid.*, I.I.I).

Religious learning and devotion constitute the minimum requirement. If psychological purification is added to them, the devotee ascends to the second grade. The highest grade involves all these and also enlightened renunciation and an exclusive reliance on God. Self-effort, which is declared to be essential, must be directed to the fulfilment of the requirements of the highest type of *adhikāra* or worth in order to effectuate the highest ideal.

### Karma-Yoga

*Karma* ordinarily means action or work as such. In the context of *sāadhanā*, it signifies the entire range of human exertion by way of action. It naturally includes self-preserving activities, moral or social activities—aiming at contributing to the welfare of one's community, according to one's conception of the community to which one belongs, be it one's family, or humanity, or the whole kingdom of animate creation—and religious activities of the nature of worship and ritual. If the first type dominates, one is leading merely a life of extended selfishness. The second would dominate if secular humanism is the ruling philosophy. The third would dominate in a strongly religious mode of life. How is this realm of *karma* to be appropriated in a scheme of *sāadhanā* for the highest good? The *Gītā* combated the view that action as such in all its levels and types is bad, and must be renounced, and that actionless contemplation is the the road to salvation. All the Vedāntins accept the point of view of the *Gītā*. They also accept the alternative presented by the *Gītā* that action freed from desire and dedicated to God can and does lead to the liberation of the spirit. But another question is inevitable for Vedānta, governed as it is by the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The latter assert again and again that knowledge and nothing else can be the direct means of release. How is the *karmayoga* of the *Gītā* to be integrated with the way of *jñāna* advocated by the Upaniṣads? The Vedāntin is committed to the exaltation of *jñāna*, and he has to concede a significant role to *karma* also.

Madhva handles the situation in the characteristic Vedāntic way. He holds in the first place that *jñāna* alone is the way to salvation. He says : 'That those in whom *jñāna* has arisen attain liberation is settled....It is established as a universal and necessary principle that only through knowledge is liberation to be attained....There is no controversy with regard to the thesis that he who has knowledge is destined for liberation' (*ibid.*, III.4.25,27).

What then is the place of *karma* ? To this question, Madhva offers a twofold answer. *Karma* done in the spirit of the *Gītā* is necessary for the emergence of *jñāna* ; and the resultant of *jñāna*, namely, the joy of release, gets augmentation and additional excellence if a man of knowledge performs *karma*. (*Ibid*, 111-4-25-26). In other words, the performance of works, of the nature of Dharma, renders the individual fit for Jnana and if they are continued after enlightenment, they contribute to the range and intensity of the joy of spiritual freedom. In the initial stages of Sadhana Karma is indispensable and even in the last, it is not useless. But the direct and immediate means of salvation is the inward illumination of soul.

### Psychological Self-Culture

The foregoing is the ethics of action. Madhva takes a similar stand on what may be called the ethics of disposition. The Upaniṣads specify certain important elements of this aspect of self-culture. They are *śama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titikṣā*, and *samādhāna*. *Śama* is understood as steadfast devotion to God. *Dama* is control of the senses. *Uparati* is taking delight in the indwelling presence of the Lord (Trivikrama's *Tattvadīpikā* on *Brahma-Sūtra*, I.1.1). *Titikṣā* is bearing with equanimity the dualities of pains and pleasures. *Samādhāna* is dwelling in the thought of God continuously. These are said to be accessory to *jñāna* (commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, III.4.27). They serve *jñāna* in a twofold way. They serve to establish knowledge firmly in the aspirant's mind, and they also enhance the joy of realization accruing from knowledge.

We may note two special points about this ethics of disposition. The dispositional virtues are not placed higher than the ethics of action in any redical fashion. In the interpretation of *śama* and *uparati*, the element of *bhakti* is introduced.

### Pramāṇas

The fundamental position accorded to *jñāna* or knowledge has been indicated already. Now the exact nature of this knowledge and the ways of acquiring it are to be determined. Knowledge has three principal sources : perception, inference, and scripture. Madhva has a statement determining the relative worth of these sources. He says : ' The best knowledge is of the form of direct experience that is in accordance with the import of scripture. Mere scriptural knowledge forms the intermediate variety. The lowest knowledge is that which is acquired through mere perception. Reason is of value in resolving conflicts within the deliverances of these two sources. By itself, reason is no independent source of knowledge ' (*ibid.*, II.1.19). Knowledge based on mere observation occupies the lowest level. Mere reasoning, not exercised on the data furnished by perception and revelation, can contribute no knowledge. It is of value only when it is exercised to remove the apparent incoherences of perception and revelation. Mere revelation, unaided by reason and not confirmed by direct experience, may be superior to bare observation ; but it is still an inferior grade of knowledge. Only experience and revelation, rendered coherent by reason, constitute perfect knowledge. The statement works out a fine synthesis of the *Pramāṇas*, without upholding any one of them exclusively and without discarding any one of them unconditionally. It is also worthy of note that the scripture itself is said to reach fulfilment in direct experience. There is thus an adjustment and relative valuation of observation, reason, revelation, and mystic experience.

### Śravaṇa

While this is the general conception of the ways of knowing, something further needs to be said concerning the *jñāna* that

liberates. It is only the knowledge of the supreme Reality that leads to the *summum bonum*. In fact, that is the supreme knowledge. Knowledge of lesser realities that does not involve the understanding that the lesser realities live, move, and have their being in the Deity is no knowledge. Knowledge, in an ultimate sense, is the knowledge of God.

The third *sūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa enunciates that God or Brahman is knowable only through the scriptures. Madhva, commenting on this, says : ‘Śāstra is the source of knowledge concerning Brahman’ (*ibid.*, I.1.3). He also says elsewhere that Nārāyaṇa—another term for Brahman of the Upaniṣads—is *sadāgamaikavijñeya*, i.e. knowable only through the right scriptures. Madhva himself enumerates what he regards as the right scriptures : ‘They are the four Vedas, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Pañcarātra*, and the original *Rāmāyaṇa*, and other texts conforming to these’ (*ibid.*). The process of acquiring knowledge about Brahman through the scriptures is called *śravaṇa* or hearing. That constitutes the first stage of knowledge.

### Manana

A simple acquisition of textual knowledge does not produce conviction. The import of the scripture itself may disclose *prima facie* self contradictions. It may also appear contradictory to the rest of human knowledge gathered through the other ways of knowing. It is also possible that the other systems of philosophy, propounding alternative theories of ultimate Reality, may appear equally plausible. In such a predicament, mere acquaintance with scripture does not suffice to produce assent to its declarations, as the impulse to assent is thwarted by doubts engendered by *prima facie* contradictions. There is no knowledge without positive intellectual commitment and affirmation. Hence the process of *jijñāsā* or critical consideration is necessary. This is also called *manana*. The entire treatise of Bādarāyaṇa is devoted to this process of reflective scrutiny. In particular, the second chapter undertakes to resolve all the apparent contradictions in Vedānta and to expose the fallacies of the rival metaphysical systems. While *śravaṇa* removes ignorance as

simple privation of knowledge, *manana* is calculated to destroy scepticism originating from felt contradictions and misconceptions. Madhva contends that we must go on learning the scriptures as long as there is ignorance, and go on reasoning about them as long as there is doubt regarding their reasonableness (*ibid.*, IV.1.12).

### Nididhyāsana

When *śravaṇa* and *manana* have completed their work, and the aspirant is consequently established in the certitude of knowledge, the process called *nididhyāsana*, *dhyāna* or *upāsanā*, supervenes. *Śravaṇa* and *manana* are its necessary antecedents, and it is their necessary consequent. It signifies meditation or practising the presence of God. A word may be said as to why it is necessary, and why the aspirant should not rest in mere rational conviction. Scriptural learning and philosophy based on it can give us only mediate and indirect knowledge. Judging by the nature of Brahman, which is the all-permeating and self-revealing Reality, there is no reason why our knowledge of it should be mediate and indirect. Only what exists under limitations of time and space, and whose being is not all-pervading, can be the object of mediate apprehension. But Brahman is the exact antithesis of all this. Hence there is nothing in the nature of Brahman that could render it inaccessible to direct apprehension. The only other explanation of the indirectness of our apprehension of Brahman would be in terms of the defects of the subject and his instruments of apprehension. It is but fitting that the aspirant must strive to outgrow the limitations that condemn him to a non-perceptual manner of knowing the supreme Being. Such a striving would be inherent in the very aspiration for self-perfection or *mokṣa*. Revelation and reason are inferior substitutes for the direct vision of God. While they are invaluable for a soul in the state of degradation, and permit to it direct perception of only trivialities, the ultimate ideal must be the ascent to a level in which its perceptive power unfolds itself to its natural dimensions, and it literally sees God and needs no scripture or *jijñāsā* to enable it to affirm Him.

Meditation is the means prescribed for destroying the limitations and defects that obstruct the direct experience of God. Hence Madhva contends that one must practise meditation as long as one's knowledge of God is mediate and indirect (*ibid.*). His commentator, Trivikrama Paṇḍitācārya, has a fine sentence on the matter: 'Without continuous contemplation, the obstacles to the vision of the infinite One cannot be annihilated.' Meditation thus fills the interval between mediate knowledge and immediate reallization. Without the former, it would have no settled subject-matter, and, but for the aspiration for the latter, there would be no necessity for it.

One interesting classification of the types of *upāsānā* is given by Madhva. The unenlightened seek communion with God as dwelling in the sacred images. The ritualists worship Him in the sacred fire. The *yogins* contemplate on Him as dwelling in their own hearts. Some others regard Him as residing in only external nature. But the wise ones meditate upon Him as immanent in all (*ibid.*, I.1.31). The attribution of wisdom to the last class of devotees carries the implication that their mode of meditation is the best. While no mode of worship is prohibited, the one imbued with the sense of the omnipresence of the Deity is accorded the highest place.

### Aparokṣjñāna

The three stages of knowledge, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *upāsānā*, are no doubt quite essential. But the knowledge that effects the emancipation of the individual is something that is superior to them all, and it is something that constitutes their fruition. It is the direct apprehension of God. Madhva is very emphatic on the point. He says: 'Liberation is not accomplished by mere knowledge, but by immediate apprehension' (*ibid.*, III.3.49). It is neither learning, nor reflection, nor meditation, but only perception of the highest that effects the final release of the soul. The assertion is so decisive, and is made in so many works of the Ācārya, that it requires no further discussion. The *karma-yoga* of the aspirant and all his culture of dispositions are just the means for acquiring mental purity

and fitness for knowledge. Knowledge is the means of release. But even in the sphere of knowledge, the assimilation of the sacred wisdom of the scripture, the reasoned consideration of it, and the devout meditation of the divine Reality are instrumental to the final stage of knowledge. This culmination of the process of knowledge consists of the perception of the Infinite. It is this perception that really constitutes the liberating knowledge. It is only the direct intuition of God that can make the individual soul free.

### Bhakti

With the recognition of *aparokṣajñāna*, or direct knowledge as the means of salvation, we have comprehended one fundamental thought of Madhva on the *sāadhanā* for *mokṣa*. We must go on to take adequate note of another fundamental thought.

Madhva is a philosopher of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* may be roughly defined, at this stage, as the love of God. We shall study Madhva's final definition of it later. This factor of *bhakti* has been given a pervading and dominating position in the scheme of *sāadhanā*. In the first place, it enters as an element in *karmayoga* itself, for, after all, *karma* is work done for the purpose of serving God. Madhva accepts the *Bhāgavata* definition of *karma* as the action done to please God (*ibid.*, I.2.21). As already noted, in the interpretation of the dispositional virtues like *śama* and *uparathi*, the element of *bhakti* is introduced. *Śama* is the steadfast direction of thought towards God, and *uparati* is the finding of joy only in God. *Śravaṇa* and *manana* do not produce correct and convincing knowledge, unless the aspirant pursues them with loving devotion to God. In his *Viṣṇutattva-vinirṇaya*, Madhva acknowledges the principle that the *śāstra* yields its secrets only to those who have steadfast love of God. In other words, even the mediate knowledge of God to be gathered from the scriptures is possible only through loving devotion. The meditation resulting from that mediate knowledge must be loving meditation. It is *dhyāna* characterized by *bhakti*. It is no cold and heartless contemplation. Nor is it contempla-

tion mixed with other emotional attitudes like fear or hatred. It is only the positive ardour of longing that can make meditation genuine and effective. While enumerating the means for the direct apprehension of God, Madhva takes care to add *bhakti* to *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *dhyāna* : 'The principal sources of the wealth of knowledge are *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *dhyāna*, and *bhakti*, and nothing else' (*ibid* I.I.I.)

*Grahaṇa* (apprehension) is possible only through *sneha* (love). The immediate consequence of the vision of God is the emergence of supreme love or *paramabhakti*. As it is founded on a direct knowledge of the magnificence of the object of adoration, this consequent *bhakti* reaches its highest stature and intensity. Hence it is called *parama*. It does not end there. The fruit of the direct realization of God, and of the consequent love of Him, is release. The greatest joy of release consists in the practice of *bhakti* that it facilitates. *Mukti* is nothing but the enjoyment of perfect *bhakti*. So *bhakti* is no mere means. It is a fundamental constituent of the end itself. Madhva records this pervading and dominating role of *bhakti* in the *Anuvyākhyāna* (3-4) in the following words : 'From *bhakti* arises Vedāntic knowledge. From that knowledge arises further *bhakti*. From that *bhakti* arises the vision of God. From the vision arises further *bhakti*. From that *bhakti* follows release. From release follows *bhakti*. That *bhakti* itself constitutes the bliss of the supreme state of release.' *Bhakti* is thus the universal means at every stage of the pilgrimage of the finite self, and it also constitutes the absolute end. It is the chief strength and the final goal.

While such is the pervading dominance of *bhakti* in the spiritual life, it is necessary to comprehend its exact nature. In the first place, it is love. In the second place, it is love that triumphs over every obstacle, every privation, and every temptation to deviate. It is irrepressible, invincible, and all-conquering. It consumes every hindrance and effects the enhancement of its own flame. It is a mighty Gaṅgā that overpowers every possible obstruction, and swells as it advances. In the third place, even as God surpasses all else immeasurably, *bhakti*

exceeds all other loves. Even selflove, which is most intense in the natural man, is nothing before this absorbing passion for God. It is supreme in the double sense of being directed to the Supreme and of surpassing all other loves in fervour and intensity. It has no rival. Lastly, it is founded on a definite knowledge of the greatness of its object. It is intellectual love of God. All other loves may be blind and mistaken, but the love of God presupposes a definite realization of His infinitude. It is passion that feeds on truth, and is not extinguished like other passions by it. *Bhakti* is adoration springing from perfection of understanding. Madhva's definition of *bhakti* runs thus : 'Love that is preceded by a knowledge of the greatness of its object, that is immovable, and that exceeds all other loves, is *bhakti*. Only through it is liberation achieved and by no other way' (Trivikrama on *Brahma-Sūtra*, III.2.19). All-conquering, all-exceeding, and fully enlightened adoration of God is *bhakti*. An attachment which is helplessly dependent on favourable circumstances, which is one attachment among many attachments of equal worth and which flourishes under the shelter of blindness and ignorance, is not *bhakti*. It is its extreme antithesis.

### Prasāda

*Aparakṣaṇāna* and *bhakti* are two of the fundamentals of *sādhana* according to Madhva. The first factor does justice to the dictum of the Upaniṣads that knowledge liberates. The second does justice to a factor emphasized by the *bhakti* tradition. Madhva demonstrates the basic unity of the Upanisadic philosophy of knowledge and the exalted religion of pure love.

We are now to consider the third fundamental in the life of *sādhana*. It is what is called *prasāda*, meaning the grace of God. Madhva declares that, without this grace, *mokṣa* is unattainable (commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, I.1.1).

There is difficulty here. With equal emphasis, it has been declared that there is no *mokṣa* except through *aparokṣajñāna*. It has also been asserted that only through *bhakti* release is to be attained. Which of these three is the ultimate and proximate

means of *mokṣa* ? We are not left in doubt with regard to the answer. Really, divine grace is the ultimate means. It is eternal and ever ready. It is *siddha*, an abiding actuality. It has to be activated through human effort. It is not arbitrary or irresponsible; and it does neither forsake the ripe *sādhaka*, nor descend on the unripe, irrespective of the plane of his aspiration and worth. The direction that grace takes is determined by the level of aspiration actuating the seeker of grace. The 'initiative of the eternal' is there, but it descends in directions set up by human initiative. Grace is the immediate cause of all attainments, but what attainment it brings about is determined by the seeker's longing. In relation to *mokṣa*, grace is the final means, and grace is activated by the *paramabhakti* of the aspirant, so as to effect his ultimate redemption. But that *bhakti* is the outcome of *aparokṣajñāna*. Thus the final *sādhanā* is *aparokṣajñāna* leading to *paramabhakti*, which invokes divine grace that effects redemption. The chain of final *sādhanā*, consisting of these three links, may be represented by the formula '*aparokṣajñāna-paramabhakti-prasāda*.' The final redemptive efficacy belongs only to divine grace. Salvation is only through grace. But grace takes this line of operation owing to human effort culminating in supreme love issuing from direct knowledge. Man's *sādhanā* is essential for his emancipation, but his emancipation is ultimately a gift of God in gracious response to his knowledge and love. Thus Madhva affirms both the finality of divine grace and the indispensability of the spiritual endeavour of man.

Madhva's glorification of divine grace is such that he ascribes to it boundless scope. All good things are the products of grace. Values other than the highest good are also the gifts of grace. In the life of *sādhanā* for the highest end of life, in addition to being its final and proximate cause, grace fosters the *sādhaka* throughout his career of spiritual development. Madhva says that there are three levels of *prasāda* : 'The man devoted to mere works receives the lowest level of grace that procures for him *svarga*. The man devoted to the learning of scriptures etc. receives moderate grace that conducts

him to higher worlds like *janaloka*. If a man has the wealth of knowledge (*aparokṣajñāna*), he receives the highest grace that crowns him with the *summum bonum*' (*ibid.*). The ends other than *mokṣa*, like the attainment of *svarga* and *janaloka*, are also the results of grace. Even lesser ends that are normally supposed to result from one's *punya* (merit) are conferred by God himself. The law of *karma* is God's law, and the mechanism of *karma* producing its fruits is operated by God himself. Therefore, there is nothing good, however insignificant it may be, that is not a gift of grace. Its goodness is due to God, and its insignificance is due to the merits of the recipient. In the realm of the *sāadhanā* for *mokṣa*, the operation of grace is manifold. Madhva says: 'If the *sādhaka* is still in need of knowledge (direct), He grants it to him. If he is a man of knowledge, He grants him release. If he is released already from *samsāra*, He it is that grants him the joy of liberation and communion with Himself. Thus the Lord alone does everything.'

Thus, in the worldly life as well as in the spiritual and Godward life, and even in the state of freedom, the grace of God is all in all. Its last gift is the bliss of God-realization itself.

The substance of Madhva's theory of *sāadhanā* lies in the elucidation of *aparokṣajñāna*, *paramabhakti*, and *uttamaprasāda*. Of these three, the *prasāda* of Nārāyaṇa constitutes the ultimate redemptive power. To it, Madhva pays his deepest and most fervent homage.

# *The Concept of Consciousness from the Dvaita Standpoint*

The doctrine of consciousness is to be presented in its three natural aspects, metaphysical, psychological and epistemological. For purposes of this elucidation the English word 'consciousness' stands for what in Indian philosophy is variously designated as *prana*, *caitanya*, and *jñānā*, *samvid*, *jñāpti*.

## I. METAPHYSICAL :

The primary reality of consciousness is hardly capable of being denied. Only it is possible to construe it as something that arises from what is intrinsically bereft of consciousness or as some function, attribute or behaviour of what is fundamentally unconscious. This is the conventional standpoint of materialism and Dvaita like almost all the schools of Indian philosophy other than Cārvaka repudiates it. Consciousness is no derivative of what is without it and does not form just a passing feature of it. It is an ontological ultimate.

Buddhism, recognizing consciousness, as *vignanaskanda* regarded it as of the character of a flux lacking permanence and substantiality. In spite of its concession that there are two aspects in it, *ālaya vijñāna* and *pravartti vijñana*, it did not face squarely the hard fact of the continuity in consciousness as implied in the fact of recognition and all that is built upon recognition. This is one of the principal points of criticism on the part of all other schools and Dvaita fully endorses this criticism.

The third metaphysical question about consciousness is whether it is a relational category arising between a subject of consciousness and concerning an object. Advaita has the theory that this relational consciousness is an empirical and phenomenal contingency and contends that there is an ultimate and transcendent consciousness not subsisting in a subject and not

directed to an object and not even of the nature of self-awareness. Its reasons are many. In the first place, the substance and attribute relation is not logically sustainable as the two substance and attribute cannot be asserted to be mutually different and cannot also be identified. It also holds that the relation of consciousness to its object is logically inconceivable as it cannot be subsumed under *samyoga* or *somayayo* or any other such relation. As such the linking of consciousness to a subject is irrational, however much it may reflect common modes of discourse. Consciousness in its essence is non-relational, it is maintained and the notion of consciousness exercising awareness of itself is also self-contradictory for the same entity cannot both be the subject and object of itself. These are familiar and standard arguments in Advaita. The Dvaita philosophers repudiate all these objections. The relation of an attribute to the substance in which it inheres is not bare identity or bare distinction. It is an identity that admits of functional diversification. The principle explanatory of this position is named *viśeṣa* and this is a central metaphysical category. The relation of consciousness to its object cannot be subsumed naturally under any other relation. It constitutes a unique relation and can be simply named consciousness-object relation, *viśayi-viśaya-bhavasambandha*. The effort to explain this special situation in terms of other relation must necessarily fail. The concept of self-consciousness is perfectly sound. Identity of the subject and object is possible in a cognitive process. There is *karmakarṭhi-virodha* in a *kārka* and not in *ajñāpaka*. There is *svātmanī-kriya-virodha* and there is no *virodha* in *svātmanī-jñāpti*. So Dvaita contends that the relational character is fundamental and it is the *self that is conscious of the object* and is *conscious of itself also*.

There is a further metaphysical proposition about consciousness. It is not all that exists. The unconscious, the physical or the non-self, is also a reality however much it may lack metaphysical eminence. It too exists irreducibly. It is no illusion. Illusions do occur when consciousness is conditioned by an alien factor, be it *māyā* as in Advaita or *vāśana* as in *Vijñāna-vāda*.

Illusion of matter presupposes something very much akin to matter that perverts spirit into that illusion. This is the notorious *bhāvarūpa*. There is an aspect or element in reality that is a stubborn and irreducible object devoid of all forms of subjectivism and panpsychism.

## II. PSYCHOLOGICAL:

With the metaphysical starting point thus gained with regard to consciousness, we have to proceed to a psychological account of the modes of consciousness. As consciousness is what belongs to the conscious subject, the hierarchy of subjects posited in the theology of the school must be taken note of and thus the levels of consciousness pertaining to the members of the hierarchy are to be indicated. These modes of consciousness are predominantly cognitive and the other modes of consciousness, conative and affective, come into the picture incidentally.

The word for the cognitive mode of consciousness is *pramāṇā*. This word is used in two senses. *Pramāṇa* may mean the achieved apprehension of the related object, in which context the *pramāṇa* is named *kevala-pramāṇa*. It may also mean the mechanism, the sensory and mental apparatus, through which the acquisition of apprehension takes place and this is called *anu-pramāṇa*.

*Kevala-pramāṇa* as belonging to the Supreme Being, Viṣṇu, is absolute and infinite. As belonging to His Divine Consort, Lakṣmī, it is appropriately conditioned by the fact that it depends upon Viṣṇu and does not comprehend the totality of His glory. But it is natural and eternal to her. Both these types of *kevala-pramāṇa* belong to a class by themselves, as they are intrinsic to their subjects and comprehend the entire range of reality, though the types differ between themselves from the point of view of independence and completeness.

The next type of *kevala-pramāṇa* is what characterises the yogins. *Yoga* means the intuitive illumination gained through disciplined spiritual endeavour. There are three levels of yogins, the *Ṛju yogins*, *tattvika-yogins*, and *atattvika-yogins*. *Ṛju yogins* are those superior individual selves that can take up the position

of Brahma, the highest of individual souls, by the process of their spiritual evolution. Their knowledge is less than that of Lakṣmī in range and details naturally. The *tattvika yogins* form an order lower than these and are to take up cosmic functions. They are the presiding deities. Their knowledge is lesser than that of the *ṛju yogins*. *Atattvika yogins* have no such cosmic roles and their knowledge is still less. These three are the levels of yogic consciousness.

An important distinction emerges at all levels of knowledge below that of Lakṣmī. All selves beneath Lakṣmī are *jīvas* or individual souls and are subject to the mundane experience of bondage. In this condition they have two types of knowledge, intrinsic and extrinsic, the knowledge that belongs to them by virtue of their essential nature, *Svarūpa* and that which arises in them owing to the operation of the mind, called *mano-vṛtti-jñāna*. The mind or *manas* is an adjunct to all souls in the state of *saṁsāra*. The two Divine Spirits, Lakṣmī and the still higher Viṣṇu are without it and even so the liberated soul in the state of *mokṣa*. What this *vṛtti-jñāna* discharges should be accurately discerned. Bondage is a state of ignorance concerning God and the soul. Mental knowledge is kept open in that state of darkness for the soul, so that it may work out the emancipation towards knowledge. The highest knowledge is supra-mental and when that is lacking, mental knowledge aids the ascent to it.

A word may be said about this conception of *vṛtti-jñāna* in contrast to the *vṛtti-jñāna* in Advaita. Both agree in considering it as arising in the *manas* owing to its illuminative operations or modifications. Both agree that it obtains only in the stage of fall. But in Advaita the real and pure consciousness is subjectless and objectless and is non-temporal. The *vṛtti-jñāna* functions in the context of the duality of subject and object and is of the nature of a process. In Dvaita, on the contrary, pure consciousness also is associated with the subject and object. Only it proceeds from the self in itself. *Vṛtti-jñāna* is just a remedy or corrective to the situation of bondage in which the illuminative efficacy of *svārūpajñāna* is—impeded by the power of *avidya*. It is a blessing in the unblessed state of spiritual degradation.

To the *manas* belong, the usual faculties or aspects familiarized by Sāṅkhya, such as *citta*, *ahaṁkāra* and *buddhi*. Through it arises the integrated knowledge of external world presented by the senses. It also brings about psychic propensities such as *iccha* (desire), *prayatna*, (volition,) *sukha*, *duhkha*, *saṁskāra*, pleasure, pain and impressions of previous experiences. It is the factor that is responsible for memory. It can thus be seen that the *manas*, with its manifold *vṛitts*, is the subject-matter of empirical psychology.

We have to continue the account of the modes of consciousness of *kevala-pramāṇa*, below the level of the yogins. There are three kinds of individual souls in this *Ayogi* sector, *mukti-yogyas*, *nitya-saṁsārins* and *tamo-yogyas* and their *kevala-pramāṇa* suffers appropriate degeneration.

The theological frame-work of the consideration of *kevala-pramāṇa* is perfectly justified. If there is a hierarchy of conscious subjects, acknowledged on scriptural grounds, to treat of knowledge as it obtains only in the mundane and human levels would be an illegitimate restriction. Further, the quality, range and depth of knowledge vary naturally from level to level and this variation should be discerned sharply. There is nothing wrong if, after due notice of mundane *kevala-pramāṇa*, a theological philosopher covers in his survey other levels of cognition. If the theology itself is distasteful and the categories admitted on the evidence of revelation are discarded, Dvaita readily offers itself for a dialectical confrontation.

The transition to *anupramāṇa* marks an entry into the familiar sphere of the ways of knowing. Dvaita recognizes three methods of knowledge, *pratyakṣa* (perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *śabda* (testimony). While in the treatment of these there is considerable agreement with a large number of other schools, there are also striking points of speciality. Dvaita sees no logical basis for recognising other *pramāṇas* such as *arthāpatti*, *upamāna* and *abhāva*. It holds that they can be validly subsumed under the admitted three *pramāṇas*. It also does not countenance attempts to reduce the number further.

On each of the *pramāṇas* Dvaita has some distinctive tenets. In its accounts of *pratyakṣa*, unlike Sautrāntika Buddhism, Sāṅkhya-yoga and Advaita Vedānta, it upholds the theory of direct perception. The representative theory of perception would pave the way for subjectivism and the realistic temper of Dvaita precludes the position. The object of perception, according to the school, is something distinguished by differentiating characteristics. It rejects the Buddhist, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Advaitic versions of *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*. It advances beyond Viśiṣṭādvaita in this regard and holds indeterminate perception to be a psychological myth. This view lends support to the pluralistic element in Dvaita. In the sensory equipment engaged in perception in addition to the usual five cognitive senses and the *manas*, it posits a seventh sense, the *sākṣin*. This is a great innovation. The *sākṣin* is the ultimate power of the self in so far as it gathers knowledge. The reports of the senses integrated by the *manas* is presented to the *sākṣin* for its final cognizance. It is the Ātman at work in the process of cognition. So much, perhaps, is ascribed to the *sākṣin* in Advaita also. Dvaita goes further. The *sākṣin* cognizes certain facts by itself unmediated by the senses and *manas*. It is no non-dualistic sentience transcending both self-awareness and awareness of other entities. It perceives directly and uninterruptedly the Ātman, its states like pleasure, the positive hindrances to knowledge of the nature of *avidya* in the state of bondage, the *manas*, its modifications generated by the senses, and also time and space. It is not just potency for perception but actual perception, Self-consciousness and space-and-time perception are of great philosophical importance.

The realistic orientation of the school is wrought into the very structure of the primordial cognitive mechanism. Some familiar problems of space-and-time perception are also solved thereby. The verdict of judgment of the *sākṣin* enjoys paramount veracity, from which other veracities follow.

On *anumāna* the Dvaita theorists generally follow the Nyāya pattern of formulations, with minor improvements in details. Two specific variations may be noted. It is contended that the negative inference called '*kevala-vyatireka anumāna*' is inadmis-

sible. In this there is agreement with Viśiṣṭādvaita. It is also maintained that the meticulous directions with regard to parārthānumāna are unnecessary. It is just formal elaboration and is not indispensable to the living inferential process.

On the verbal testimony, on particularly Vedic testimony, the Dvaita, like the Mimāṃsa and the other schools of Vedānta, has a great deal to say. It differs from Prabhakara Mimāṃsa in the account of verbal apprehension. This apprehension is not by way of volitional conformity but by way of cognition of reality. Motivation is not the primary target of the Vedas but the communication of metaphysical knowledge. But it agrees with the Prabhakaras in upholding the 'Gestalt' or synthetic apprehension of statements. This is what is known as *anvitābhindāna-vāda*. In this it agrees with Viśiṣṭādvaita and the Vivaraṇa school in Advaita and gives up the view of Kumarila and the Bhāmati. The Sphota theory of Bhaṭṭhari and Maṇḍana Miśra is rejected. The Advaitic view of the *mahāvākyas* as conveying an impartite import is also rejected. On the contrary, it asserts that all the scriptures have one Supreme purpose, that of proclaiming the qualitative magnificence of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Deity.

This brings us to the close of the rapid survey of the theological-cum-psychological theory of cognitive consciousness propounded in Dvaita.

### III. EPISTEMOLOGICAL

The examination of cognitive consciousness in relation to truth or validity lands us in epistemology.

The basic question in this field is the meaning of truth. The Dvaita writers are clear and straight-forward on the meaning of truth. They define it as the correspondence of judgment or proposition with the objective fact or facts it is concerned with. Thought must be *yathārtha*, i.e., it must not deviate from the facts of the case. This implies, of course, a dualism of thought and reality and the knowing process works, on all accounts, in the world of such a dualism. But metaphysically the object may be wholly under the control of the supreme Deity. This

is a different matter and confusion of epistemological dualism with metaphysical dualism would be a radical error. Even a metaphysical monism must be based on considerations that claim objectivity for themselves and they must be *vastu-tantra*.

While the subject-object correspondence is the meaning of truth, it by no means follows that the criterion of truth is correspondence. In accordance with the general pattern of Indian thinking on the question, Dvaita resorts to the coherence criterion to objectivity in relation to valid apprehension or *pramitiyogyatva* in terms of space and time in some cases, its negative aspect of non-contradiction and its pragmatic application by way of verification in practice. What fails by being incoherent, is subject to contradiction and is also nullified in the field of practice, is false. What passes these negative tests, is authenticated in the supreme test of the intuition of the *sākṣin*. Thus coherence, noncontradiction, pragmatic verification, and also intuition combine in securing the fidelity of thought to reality.

One important discussion in Indian philosophy concerns the nature of validity. The question is whether the truth or validity of a judgment or proposition is intrinsic to it or whether it is imported in to it by some alien factor. All schools of Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā uphold what is called the *svataḥ-prāmāṇya-vāda*. What generates a judgment generates its truth also in the same act. In other words truth is natural to human thinking and only when thwarted it deviates into error. To abandon this position is to land in absolute scepticism. If a judgment is to be validated by another judgment, and thought is not in its essence in rapport with reality, as the validating judgment also suffers from the same distance from reality, the gulf between knowing and being can never be bridged. It is this principle that perhaps lies at the basis of the old ontological argument and is certainly utilized by the Mīmāṃsaka supporters of the truth of the Vedic scriptures. Even the Buddhists seem to have accepted this.

“What the *Yoga-Sūtra* ascribes to.....*Ṛtambhara-prajña* seems to be the inherent character of all *prajñā*. Attainment of intellectual fidelity to reality simply requires the fulfilment of the natural law of thinking. “The real is rational and the rational is real.” By truth being intrinsic two points are meant. Thought carries within itself the nature of truth, and what brings about its truth as well. This is ‘*utpattau-svatastvam*’. The second point is that all knowing is an affirmation of its own truth and no additional process is required for cognizing the truth of the knowing in question. This is “*jñāptausvatastvam*.” Dvaita subscribes to the whole standpoint of *svatastva* and furnishes additional arguments in support. Orthodox Vedic philosophers seem to attach great faith to the truth-finding power of human thinking as against the subjectivists, phenomenologists, agnostics. Whether schools so far distrustful of human thinking can exercise with adequacy and logical competence destructive criticism negating affirmative philosophies is an open question. ‘It is suicidal to thinking to think away all thinking’, as an old Greek philosopher seems to have said.

One of the basic problems of Indian epistemology has been to allocate to the content or object of illusion a proper ontological status. The *śūnyavādin*, not interested in the truth finding power of thought, seems to have assigned it to the realm of non-being. The *viññāna-vādin* confers on it a mental status and it is illegitimately externalised in illusion. The *Prabhakaras*, *Kumarila*, and *Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika* philosophers struggle hard to give the content of illusion some footing in the world of reality. Advaita concedes to it a lower order of existence and the illusory character lies in elevating it to a higher order. *Rāmānuja* regards illusion as merely inadequate truth, pragmatically worthless. *Madhva* and following him *Jayatīrtha* subject these theories to keen analysis and criticism. They come to the conclusion that error lies in a misconstruction in which the existent may be taken as non-existent and the non-existent may be taken as existent. The point of this theory is that it concedes the possibility of cognizing the non-existent, an

innovation in the Āstika schools of epistemology. The total theory can very well be named *abhinavānyathā-khyāti*.

These doctrines of the meaning and criterion of truth, the assertion of the *svatastva* of *prāmānya* and the special theory of illusion, are the leading epistemological contributions of Dvaita.

#### IV. SĀDHANA-CONSCIOUSNESS

It has been indicated already that the Dvaita theory in general is personalistic and it holds consciousness as falling within the life of a personal spirit or self and that it is ultimately indistinguishable from the self it belongs to. Now all the individual selves constituting the metaphysical hierarchy below Lakṣmī are subject to bondage and they have to work for their emancipation which is attainment of God. Something more needs to be said of these finite spirits. Their bondage is no illusion and their emancipation is to be sought by spiritual effort and the consequent grace of God. Any account of these selves is *ipso facto* an account of consciousness which is their fundamental characteristic. Such an account is an appropriate introduction to the forms of consciousness that will be theirs in their ascending career.

Following Sāṅkhya, the Advaitic theory regarded *karṭṛtva* or agency of action as an evil and as a phenomenal appearance only. The Dvaita philosophy does not accept this position. *Karṭṛtva* is an attribute of God Himself and it does not always imply deficiency. It can very well spring from abundance and perfection as it does in the creative activity of God. Nor is it an illusory appearance on the ground that involves change in the agent. Change in itself is no demonstration of unreality and the change involved in activity is not total as it requires the continuance of the active source of action; so the finite self is surely a *kartā* within the limits of its finite personality.

Similar is the case with *bhokṭṛtva*. This means the experiencing of pleasures and pains. Such experiences are characteristics of the mundane life of bondage which is a fact, however much it may be an evil and liable to elimination. The Sāṅkhya and Advaita described this experience also as illusory. The

Sāṅkhya philosopher could hardly do so in view of his proving the reality of the Puruṣa precisely on the ground of *bhoktṛtva*. It does involve some change but no complete mutation. The desiring self must continue to exist when its desire is being fulfilled. Absolute changelessness is no criterion of reality. In the state of final blessedness there should be surely an experience of Ānanda and this constitutes *bhoga* or enjoyment. So the Ātman is a *bhokta* also.

Śaṅkara in his *Adhyāsa-Bhāṣya*, argues that knowership or *pramāṭṛtva* is a result of *adhyāsa*, the mixing of the real and the unreal and that the self in its intrinsic being does not exercise any cognitive operation. Dvaita is opposed to this thesis and holds that being the subject of knowing is the real nature of the self. A self that does not know itself nor anything else is indistinguishable from the absolute nothingness of *Śūnya*. So the self is a *jñātā* or *pramātā* in its authentic being.

This is the full picture of the metaphysical nature of the self. The self so constituted has to shed its mundane defilements and achieve the bliss and blessedness of communion with God. To make this advance, all the resources of personality are to be mobilized. The utilization of *kartṛtva* in the God-ward direction constitutes *karma yoga* conceived on the profound lines of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Its cognitive nature must be sublimated into understanding the majesty of God. This has to be worked out through *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*, the rungs of the ladder as pictured in the Upaniṣads. When *nididhyasana* or *upāsana* takes on the character of *bhakti*, a direct apprehension of God ensues. This apprehension gives rise to greater *bhakti*, God's Grace is rendered operative by this mature *bhakti* and the individual is released into the everlasting abundance of life in accordance with his ineradicable worth. *Bhakti* and Divine Grace aid in the process of God-realization and they function in the various ascending levels. The character of individual consciousness transformed into the highest *bhakti* is described in the most memorable words by Jayatīrtha. This may well be taken as representing the summit of that Consciousness.

परमेश्वर भक्तिर्नाम निरवधिक-अनन्त-अनवद्य-कल्याणगुणत्व-ज्ञानपूर्वकः  
 खात्मात्मीयसमस्तवस्तुभ्यः-अनेकगुणाधिकः-अन्तरायसहस्रेणापि-अप्रतिबद्धः  
 निरन्तरप्रेमप्रवाहः (न्यायसुधा)

*Bhakti* is no inferior alternative to *jñāna* or just an equipment for it but is a maturation of the highest *jñāna*, and it is no instrument to any other end but constitutes the highest end-in-itself. It commands the power to resist and annihilate all opposition. It is no passing episode but an abiding passion.

# *Sri Madhva on Ananda Mayadhikarana*

## **I—The Brahma-Sutra**

I propose to discuss in this article Sri Madhva's contribution to our understanding of the manifestly important Adhikarana in the Brahma-Sutra devoted to the elucidation of the Taithiriya Upanishad.

As an introduction it is necessary to appreciate the status of the Sutra-Text according to the Acharya. He accords to it the highest position of authority and states that it embodies paravidya. I know that this status of paravidya assigned to it requires some discussion. But we have no space for that consideration. For Madhva it is the fundamental text in as much as he has commented upon it in four of his works to suit four types of philosophical need. He exhibits the magnificent design of the work in all his commentaries. It is divided into four chapters dealing with Samanvaya, Avirodha, Sadhana and Phala. This is more or less the older understanding of the structure. But in the details concerning the padas of the four Adhyayas, Madhva is original. In the Samanvaya-Adhyaya, the first pada shows that the terms of the Upanishads, which are normally applied to other entities, are truly and pre-eminently significant of only Brahman or Vishnu. The second pada deals with the connotative designations in the Upanishads and they are shown to be appropriate only to the Supreme Being. The third pada interprets terms and concepts which—in normal usage apply indifferently to both the highest reality and other lesser beings as standing for only the former. The fourth pada performs the task of proving that even the terms used exclusively in connection with the lower entities, refer only to the supreme in the world of Vedanta. Thus the first Adhyaya establishes that all the names, terms, concepts and designations that are found in the vedantic scriptures, namely, the Upanishads, are fundamentally and primarily designations and

characterizations of the central, ultimate, metaphysical principle of Brahman. The first five adhikaranas or sections of the first pada are of an introductory character. They lay down the qualifications and necessity for the inquiry to Brahman, the identity of Brahman with Vishnu, the definition of Brahman as the ground of the origin, maintenance, dissolution, control, ignorance and knowledge, and bondage, and liberation, of all existence consisting of matter and the finite selves, the basic source of our knowledge of Brahman as consisting of the Sastra, the interpretation of the Sastra on proper canons, as proclaiming the majesty of Brahman and the possibility of the construing the nature of Brahman through the sacred verbal testimony. The second adhyaya is devoted to demonstrating that the position of vedanta is free from contradictions. No objection raised is tenable and no view other than the thesis of Vedanta is free from contradictions. There is no inner contradiction in the philosophy advanced. The third Adhyaya has an equally neat scheme. It formulates sadhana or the pathways to god-realization as consisting of renunciation, bhakti, meditation and the efficacy of the direct experience of the supreme reality. The fourth Adhyaya portrays the ascent of the individual soul to God, through the liquidation of Karma, the passage beyond the bodily shackles, the supra-mundane way of progression to the Deity and the final ecstatic consummation of God-attainment. No wonder the Brahma-Sutra with this masterly plan has fascinated Sri Madhva beyond measure.

## II—Anandamayadhikarana

It is necessary to place the Adhikarana to be discussed in the perspective of this great design. It is the first of the Adhikaranas that come after the five great introductory Adhikaranas. It is one of those priceless Adhikaranas that unmistakably point to the Upanishad that they consider. It contains the very term 'Anandamaya', which is presented uniquely in the Taithiriya Upanishad, a truly magnificent upanishad. It illustrates effectively the manner in which the Sutra-Kara determines the import

of the sruti passages. The upanishad contains three chapters and the sutra-kara focusses his discussion on the second chapter. That chapter accomplishes many great things. It starts with the declaration that the 'knower of Brahman attains the highest'. It proceeds to define Brahman, the manner of knowing it and the exact nature of the attainment. These definitions receive elaboration through the rest of the chapter. Brahman is the source of all and in its creative self-unfoldment five selves described as Annamaya-Atma, Prana-maya-Atma, Manomaya-Atma, Vijnana-maya Atma, Anandamaya-Atma emerge serially into manifestations. They are pictured as composite personalities. The creation of Brahman is of the nature of a creative out-pouring and the supreme installs itself in the heart of every created being. It is as such, as dwelling in oneself, that the Lord of creation has to be cognized and meditated upon. Such contemplation leads to attainment of supreme unspeakable bliss and utter release from fear. Such is the rough gist of the chapter.

### III—The pre-Madhva Interpretation

The problem that engages the Sutra-Kara is obviously the determination of the identity of the Anandamaya-Atma. A pre-Sankarite commentator, referred to as the vrithikara in the advaitic tradition, brushes aside all objections and identifies the Ananda-maya as Brahman. We owe this information to Sankara. But Sankara is not satisfied with that identification and regards the Ananda-Maya as the conditioned Brahman and holds the five Atmas set up in the Upanishad as the five sheaths of the ultimate Brahman. In reality, for him, the ultimate Atman gets posited in the Upanishad as the putcha, tail, of the Ananda maya. Accordingly he suggests an alternative interpretation of the Adhikarana.

His main arguments may be briefly stated.

(1) The termination 'maya' means modification. When the four earlier Atmas are regarded accordingly as composite configurations of a phenomenal nature, there is no logic in attaching to mayat in the expression Ananda-maya, the signifi-

cance of 'abundance' the other possible meaning of the suffix, exploited by the vrithikara.

(2) Though the Upanishad does not speak of an Atman higher than Ananda-maya, it does speak of Brahman, as the tail or support of it.

(3) It is not tenable to identity both the whole, Ananda-maya and its tail, with Brahman. The text explicitly mentions Brahman as the tail.

(4) The Upanishad declares that he who denies Brahman loses his being and he who affirms it truly is. In this great pronouncement only Brahman is spoken of and not the Ananda-maya. It is also not conceivable that one can deny the Ananda-maya as it is composed of well-known earthly felicities.

(5) The term 'putcha, tail' should not be literally understood. It just means substratum or basis. It is an oft-repeated position in the Upanishads that all earthly pleasures are drippings from the supreme bliss of Brahman.

(6) To hold that the Ananda-maya Atma, which consists of parts, priya, moda, pramoda, Ananda as Brahman is to make it a determinate and particularized entity, savishesha. But the Upanishad speaks of Brahman as being inaccessible to thought and words and therefore as indeterminate.

(7) Further, to speak of Brahman as abounding in bliss, is to admit existence of suffering in it, though in a small measure. But the Upanishads rule out absolutely everything else in Brahman.

(8) Ananda-maya as made up of earthly pleasures varies from individual to individual. But Brahman the ultimate Atman, is an integral principle, liable to no variations and division.

(9) The Upanishad speaks everywhere and in the next chapter also, of only Ananda, where as it speaks of Ananda-maya in a restricted context. Ananda is Brahman and not the Ananda-maya-atma.

(10) The Upanishad ascribes creative role to Brahman or Atman and not to the Ananda-maya.

(12) While describing the attainment of the highest goal, the Upanishad says, that the enlightened seer passes beyond (Upa-

Samkramati) all the five lower Atmas, including the Ananda-maya-Atma.

On these main grounds Sankara rejects the identification of the Ananda-maya with Brahman. This is a formidable array of subtle textual arguments. Fortunately, we are not to discuss them in detail for our purpose is not to deal with the Adhikarana or the Upanishad as such in all thoroughness. We have to move on to Madhva's elucidation. Further, the pre-Madhva commentators, Bhaskara and Ramanuju have subjected them to full examination in their endeavour to establish the identity of the Ananda-maya Atman with Brahman. The putcha theory of Brahman and the Kosa-theory of the Ananda-maya become highly questionable in consequence. Madhva belongs to this group of commentators who uphold that Brahman is Ananda Maya. It may be noted in passing that all these critics of Sankara share a common proposition that Brahman, the ultimate reality, is not Nirvisesha, indeterminate. In their view neither the Taitheriya nor any other Upanishad advocates such a conception of Brahman. The conception itself, for them, is untenable intrinsically.

#### IV—Madhva's elucidation

Madhva's commentary on the section consists of several important elements.

(a) He endorses in substance Bhaskara's and Ramanuja's criticism of the putcha-view of Brahman and the thesis of the five kosas. As could be expected in an original commentator of his type, his endorsement is issued in his own characteristic manner.

(b) To the objection that Brahman cannot be the 'tail' of the Ananda-maya and also the Ananda-maya itself as a totally, he has an original answer. He resorts to the metaphysical principle of 'Visesha' by virtue of which descriptions of Brahman in terms of inner distinctions, do not imply the ontological reality of such distinctions.

(c) He draws attention to the error of interpreting 'upasamkramana' as 'Atikramana', as 'passing beyond'. The prefix

(Upa') has to be totally ignored in such an understanding of the term. This is a vital grammatical point. In this also Madhva is original. So, if the term is properly construed, it signifies no superseding of the Ananda-maya but the ascent to it as the final goal of spiritual life.

(d) Now we come to the greatest contribution of Madhva to our understanding of Anandamayadhikarana in the Sutra and the Taithiriya Upanishad, the basic scripture under reference. We have the five purushas or Atmas, Annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya and Anandamaya. The mayat termination may signify either '*made up of*' or '*abounding in*' or '*of the nature of*'. The pre-Sankarite vrithikara Bhaskara, and Ramanuju understand the mayat as signifying a composite product in the case of all or some of the earlier four expressions. Some of the four may have the termination meaning just '*of the nature of*'. But all the four Annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya represent forms of being other and lesser than the superb Atman. Here there is surely an exegetical anomaly of making the suffix 'mayat' take different meanings in the same passage propounding the five realms of being. Sankara attacks this forcefully and proposes that in all the five cases it must be taken in the sense of '*made up of*' and all the five be taken as the lower and derivative realms of phenomenal being constituting the sheaths of Brahman, the noumenal essence. Neither he nor his other critics explore the possibility of taking 'mayat' as signifying abundance in all the five cases. Madhva seizes this possibility and argues that all the five, anna, prana, manas, vijñana and ananda are different aspects of the supreme reality. There is no hierarchy of beings here or of the sheaths of the supreme Being. Brahman is what creatures live by, the primal energizer of all, abounding in knowledge both general and particular and supremely blissful in itself and imparting bliss to the creatures that contemplate on it. This harmonizes beautifully with Bhrigu's successive discovery of Brahman in the third chapter, as anna, prana, manas, vijñana and ananda. Surely this glory of Brahman surpasses all our understanding and paltry description. The

exegetical anamoly of Sankara taking Ananda-maya of the second chapter as the lower Atman and the Ananda of the third as indicating the unconditioned Atman is avoided effectively. The liberated soul attains this Brahman of five-fold glory and does not pass beyond it, as the defective understanding of 'Upasamkramana' made out. Abundance does not imply the admixture of the opposite in a small measure but cancels the supposition of the smallness of what a thing abounds in.

Madhva follows up this adventure in interpretation and discovers in the five forms of Brahman an elaboration of the initial definition of Brahman as Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam. The reality of Brahman is explicated in Anna and prana. It is the source of all being and power. The knowledge of Brahman consists in 'manas' apprehension of generalities and 'vijñana', the comprehension of distinctions. The infinite nature of Brahman is brought out in 'Ananda' form, as all the Upanishads and in particular, the Bhuma-vidya of Chandogya intimate, there is no bliss in anything finite. It is not an error to attribute to Brahman, these five fold perfections, for to be bereft of attributes is to be without existence itself. Brahman's infinity signifies its infinity of attributes. Only we have to remember the category of 'Visesha' and construe the nature of attributes as integral to the substantive nature of Brahman. The three-fold definition of Brahman is perfectly worked out in the five-fold elaboration. There are many minor and incidental innovations also in Madhva's exegesis. But the outstanding outcome is the glorification of Brahman-Vishnu as five fold, the broad-based vindication of the Ananda-Maya as constitutive of the Supreme and the exhibition of this glorification as the legitimate exposition of the fundamental definition of Brahman, as Satya, Jnana and Ananta.

Well may the Acharya be adored as Ananda-Tirtha.

# *Radhakrishnan, A Philosopher With A Difference*

## I

The intellectual career of Radhakrishnan stretches through a long duration and covers a wide range of reflection. He was marked as a promising young philosopher by Lokamanya Tilak in his *Gītārahasya*. He acquired popular fame by his brightly written book on *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. In later years he edited works and wrote considerably on Mahatma Gandhi. Mahadev Desai in his work on the *Gītā* and Pandit Nehru in his *Discovery of India* took substantial material from him bearing on philosophy and religion. His speeches and writings built up a great reputation in international philosophical circles. C.E.M. Joad wrote a fine and telling book on him and the International Library of Living Philosophers edited by Schilpp produced a very substantial volume on him. His entry into the field of world-thought was greatly due to the early sponsoring, he received from Muirhead, the last great Idealist of Oxford of the present century.

The quantum of his contribution is enormous. His first work to catch attention was the youthful and belligerent *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*. He starts the work with the intent to defend Absolute Idealism of the type developed by Bradley and Bosanquet through a critique of several leading contemporaneous thinkers who deviate from that position and he attributes their deviation to the influence of religion. He concludes with a broad statement of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, thereby succumbing, as it were, to the religious tradition of Vedānta. The work as a whole foreshadows the direction of thought he was to elaborate in his subsequent writings in great detail. It also shows that his philosophical reflection takes on the character of historical survey out of which

Idealism of the Absolutistic Vedāntic type emerges as the final precipitate. The next great work consists of the two substantial volumes entitled *Indian Philosophy*, in the manner of a history. Even in this, Vedāntic commitment runs in unmistakable clarity and force. In his hands, Indian philosophy gets rescued from the plane of mere Indology, though there is an enormous utilization of all the then available data on Indian philosophy reconstructed by the Sanskritic researches, Western and Indian. In the handling of themes a masterly spirit nurtured on the best in European philosophy is deployed. There is the play of imagination and art. The outcome is a brilliant presentation of the evolution of Indian philosophy as philosophy. In so vast a canvas minor inaccuracies of details and perspectives are to be expected. But the execution bears the quality of a superb imaginative reconstruction. The old traditional matter clothed in scholastic verbiage gets converted into the living word of perennial truth. Indian philosophy gets placed on the map of world thought, with all its march of systems, intricacies of doctrines and vista of daring metaphysical creativity. The technique of presenting Indian thought acquires a style and mode destined to constitute the standard for later writers. It is truly a history of Indian philosophy which is itself historic.

The next significant book was *The Hindu View of Life*, which shot into great popularity. It presented Hinduism in terms of modern thought in all its fundamental insights in a brief compass. In places, it does the work of open advocacy and minimises the limitations. But the total impression is that of a glowing case for the Hindu point of view in its largest sense. The social aspects of Indian thought are further expounded in terms of modern social philosophies in the much later work *Religion and Society*.

The personal philosophical thought of Radhakrishnan implied in all his earlier writings is involved in excessive preoccupation with contemporaneous philosophy and the history of Indian philosophy. It gets liberated into full and independent articulation in *An Idealist View of Life*, which perhaps is his best philosophical production. It is a work on the philosophy

of religion. After reviewing the challenges to religion and the substitutes offered for it, the central affirmations of religious consciousness are brought out magnificently. We have here an Idealism not constructed metaphysically in the style of Hegel or Bradley, but one founded on mystic experience. It is a departure from Radhakrishnan's older moorings. But in the exposition of that experience all the rich heritage of idealistic metaphysics is amply used. The picture of reality in this setting is drawn up in all its levels, matter, life, mind and human personality culminating in the Absolute. Into this structure of argument all the essential elements of Vedāntic thought are incorporated. It is Vedāntic idealism founded on Vedāntic experience. The fundamental thought is claimed to rest on intuition as contrasted with intellect. Herein we have one basic tenet of Radhakrishnan that the ultimate is accessible only to intuition. He advances the claim on behalf of Vedānta and ventures to demonstrate that the spirit in man has effected all his advances, in the spheres of philosophy, science, art, poetry and in short, in all the finer achievements of human life, through intuition. Intellect flourishes in fruitful subordination to the commanding vision of intuition. In the final chapter on ultimate reality there is a short digression to a critical review of Holism, Emergent evolution and the philosophy of Whitehead. One would expect a revision of his earlier strictures on Bergson in the context and some acknowledgment of the great contribution in this direction by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and Sri Aurobindo. Bradley's "higher immediacy" got fully acknowledged.

In his course of lectures at Oxford as Spalding Professor published as *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, the theme of *The Idealist View of Life* is repeated with ampler historical reference bringing out the indebtedness of Western thought to the ancient spiritual culture of India and a spirited and a sustained reply to Schweitzer's critique of Indian thought as "world-and-life negation." The familiar themes of *The Hindu View of Life* are also restated at leisure. The contrast between Eastern intuitionism and Western intellectualism is re-vindica-

ted. After several minor writings and vigorous lectures, Radhakrishnan puts on the mantles of a traditional Acārya in his translation and interpretation of the basic scriptures of Vedānta—the *Gītā*, the principal *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahma-sūtra*. There is nothing epoch-making in these, except the felicitous modes of translation and a competent mastery of all the existing literature on the texts. But a certain freshness and vitality of re-affirmation are discernible throughout with occasional originality of insight and critical appraisal of old commentaries. The oft-used texts are transmuted into vibrant documents of living spiritual wisdom. The old masters such as Deussen and Thibaut are reincarnated in the fresh expositions, with copious notes in the spirit of comparative philosophy and religion.

Such is the bulk of Radhakrishnan's major philosophical bequest to us and to the world's philosophy.

## II

It may be worthwhile to dwell a little on the dominant traits of Radhakrishnan's philosophical personality. A bare catalogue of his works conveys a poor impression of the individuality and brilliance of the contribution.

Radhakrishnan comes before us first of all as an ardent lover of Indian thought at its best as delivered in the great classics. He is no simple admirer. All his stupendous learning in Western thought-culture is harnessed to the high endeavour of presenting Indian thought as embodying the supreme spiritual wisdom of mankind. This current of higher patriotism, at once fervent and informed, runs through all his writings and speeches. In this task of reconstruction, Indian thought undergoes substantial modernization. Its apparent world-denying tendency, its theological predilection in some schools and apathy to the problem of social justice are shown to be aberrations not intrinsic to the original inspiration of the *Rishis*. His wide and accurate scholarship in the history of Western philosophy and prodigious memory serve his purpose remarkably. There is one limitation in this philosophical inheritance. He adopts wholly the Anglo-Hegelian tradition of philosophy, which is undoubtedly rich and grand,

but renders him insufficient in the treatment of other trends of European philosophy.

The tougher schools of Realism and all those which are sharply opposed to Absolute Idealism are feebly taken account of by him. The affinity of the Western Idealist tradition to Vedānta in its larger sense is marvellously mobilized by him. More than all, Radhakrishnan had the supreme gift of utterance, carrying the radiant assurance of the prophets. No wonder he inspired and elevated countless students in his classes and audiences. The writing largely follows the pattern of his philosophical oratory. He is unique in this respect. No other representative of Indian philosophy in the recent past had his forceful delivery and inspired and inspiring eloquence. He spoke with the firmness and authoritativeness of unclouded vision. The English language at its literary best was his medium. Radhakrishnan was neither a *yogin* nor a *kavi*. But he so closely approximated to both in his philosophical meditation that he almost communicated the exaltation of mystical poetry. The world's heritage of mystical poetry was his possession in abundance and he spoke forth in the same plane. He never lost the splendour of utterance even in his argumentative prose. It must also be added that his analytical method did not suffer by virtue of this gift; rather his rationalization gained added convincing power through it.

### III

The fundamentals of Radhakrishnan's philosophical standpoint can be briefly enunciated. He is principally a philosopher of religion. He is neither a speculative idealist nor a theologian. Religion for him is the reaction of the whole man to the whole of reality. It is an apprehension of the real and an enjoyment of it for its own sake. The three noteworthy points of spiritual experience are reality, awareness and freedom. This is the triadic characterization of the ultimate as, *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda*. In it all distinctions disappear. It carries its own credentials. It confers inward peace, power and joy. The experience is not ours to call up at our will. It has the character of revelation. There

is a fundamental ineffability in the experience. It lends itself only to negative terms. But the central reality is immanent in the soul of man. This is the uniform testimony of mysticism. It is a hasty logic that banishes the finite to the realm of illusion. "The one reveals itself in the many".<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that a philosophy based on this experience can be only a form of Absolute Idealism. As Radhakrishnan is a master of comparative philosophy he elucidates it in terms familiarized by Bradley and his Indian counterpart Śaṅkara. Between the two, it appears that Śaṅkara is the primary object of loyalty and the other is used to bring Śaṅkara up-to-date. The combination discloses a disadvantage. For Bradley the world of appearance is not an illusion but falls within reality 'somehow' in a transmuted form. This position finds accommodation in Radhakrishnan's absolutism. He rejects Śaṅkara's apparent acosmism and re-interprets him so as to find a place for the world in his ultimate conception. This can be seen even in his account of Advaita in his *Indian Philosophy*. So we have Śaṅkara's Advaita with a liberal admixture of non-illusionistic Vedānta.

Radhakrishnan's Idealism is founded, as we have seen, not on metaphysical argument but on the deliverance of religious experience. This mode of deriving Idealism is rendered legitimate by the fundamental distinction in epistemological value between intuition and intellect. That distinction figures throughout, in great emphasis, in all the philosophical writings of Radhakrishnan.

As opposed to the popular understanding, Vedānta has a great humanistic dimension. This is worked out greatly in Radhakrishnan's version of Vedānta. This is particularly conspicuous in his daring ascription of the ideal of *Sarvamukti* to Śaṅkara himself. He is not quite sure of himself. He says, "We offer a few considerations general and tentative and perhaps not quite self-consistent."<sup>2</sup> But the direction of this thinking is itself a remarkable advance.

The final conception of reality is that of the Absolute. How is the Absolute to be construed in relation to the God of theistic

consciousness? This is a pressing problem in all similar philosophical modes of thinking. There are two temptingly easy solutions. God may be consigned to the realm of appearances valid for theology and popular religion but not real from the higher point of view of serious metaphysics. As Radhakrishnan negatives in many ways the illusionistic version of absolutism, he does not adopt this drastically abstract Idealism. For Theism, God is the highest category with all the connected implications of personality and realism and the logic of Śaṅkara and Bradley ruled out that philosophical alternative. Radhakrishnan subscribes to that logic. He approaches the problem with a synthetic line of solution. For him God and the Absolute are one entity and it permits of two ways of conceiving, neither of which is philosophically unsound though one-sided. God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view. The Absolute is God from the pre-cosmic point of view. "We call the Supreme the Absolute, when we view it apart from the cosmos, God in relation to the cosmos." "While the Absolute is pure consciousness and pure freedom and infinite possibility, it appears to be God from the point of view of the one specific possibility which has become actualized."<sup>3</sup> The Absolute is a wider category as it holds within itself infinite possibilities but God is richer from the standpoint of concreteness. As the cosmos is no hallucination for our philosopher, he raises the status of God above that of *Īśvara* in traditional Advaita. No critical comment can be risked in our brief account on this integrative solution.

#### IV

Radhakrishnan was truly a philosopher with a difference. Though engaged in the contemplation of the eternal and ultimate, he was keenly aware of the crises of his times both national and international and lent his strong voice in support of causes noble and just. As it happened in no other case in his line, extra-philosophical positions and honour came to him in quick succession. He fulfilled his responsibilities with distinction in all such positions stretching to the most eminent. Though by profession and choice he was a metaphysician

dealing with seemingly dull and uncertain abstractions, he commanded a radiant and fascinating style of self-communication. He was heard with thrill and admired both with understanding and more often without it. His scholarship was immense and memory was dangerously prodigious, but all this was harnessed to the high endeavour of vindicating truths—spiritual or Vedāntic in an age bereft of interest in them. His metaphysical standpoint was transcendentalism or Idealism built through the austere logic of Śaṅkara and Bradley but he rested it ultimately on the affirmations of mystical religion. His hard intellectual convictions were transformed into vital experiential certainties conveyed through words of mystical poetry. He was certainly an absolute Idealist but he consistently avoided the hasty logic of acosmism. He could find room for the individual and construed his Absolute as hardly other than the concrete Godhead of the great theistic systems. His Vedānta had a strong and unconventional humanistic dimension and it was a life-affirmation in the highest sense. Hence his abiding devotion to the Mahatma; Though he enters the field of philosophy as a keen critic of recent philosophy and an imaginative historian of the great philosophical past of India, he imparts to his findings a modernist, nay, a futurist significance, with a message far transcending the bounds of narrow Indianism. He is an honour to the nation and an inspiration to all in quest of truth.

#### REFERENCE

1. *Idealist View of life*, p. 110
2. *Ibid.*, p. 306
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 343, 345

## *The Fourfold Significance of Sri Ramakrishna*

To those who had the rare good fortune of coming into contact with him and of forming his close associates, Sri Ramakrishna was of so immense an import that they rarely attempted a full formulation of what he meant to them. They simply surrendered themselves to him and achieved for themselves immortality in the spiritual world. The great Swami Vivekananda is the leading example in this band of disciples. He rarely spoke directly about his Master, but lived the life that the latter marked out for him. Those of the present time who have become the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna are literally soaked in his manifold and all-absorbing inspiration, and may not command the clarity that comes from distance for articulating their appreciation of his distinctive message. Hence I should imagine that we, comparatively distant from him in life and not altogether immersed, can manage to put in words his exact and unique significance. What we have lost in fullness of absorption, we can perhaps make up by the advantages of perspective. It is this doubtful merit that we have that emboldens me somewhat. I propose to attempt a characterisation of the great significance of Sri Ramakrishna. To me it appears that this significance is fourfold.

### A

The first and primordial point of Sri Ramakrishna's significance is that by his life and teaching he awakens the consciousness of the modern man to the supreme concern of life. The quest for the Infinite or the Divine is for Sri Ramakrishna the primary concern of life. But we, modern men, are apt to ignore it in our semi-enlightened agnosticism or simply bypass it and lose ourselves in lesser concerns. We notice the insistence on the supreme concern in the life of Ramakrishna almost from his

infancy. He literally abandoned himself to the search of God. It was the abiding and sole occupation of his life. To those that came to him, almost the first instruction he gave was the enunciation of the utmost priority of the concern for the Divine Ultimate. Like the sages of the Upanishads he saw in the Godless life a colossal self-annihilation, *mahaū vinaṣṭiḥ*. He would say with the sage of the Taittiriya that man truly lives to whom the Absolute is a pressing presence. *Asanneva sa bhavati. Asad brahmeti veda chet*. This presence of God in our conscious concerns of life is the criterion of life as against the death of unawareness. It is a foolish game to search for peace in finite trivialities. *Nālpe sukhamasti*. There is neither life nor fulfilment in the pursuit of what is less than the highest. One may almost say that this admission of God into life as the fundamental concern is the basic proposition in Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy.

## B

I pass on now to the second great element in the teaching. Religion was a reality to Ramakrishna in a special sense. He was dissatisfied with secondhand spirituality. To him the fundamental object of religious consciousness was not a matter of hypothesis or scriptural testimony or a simple article of dogmatic faith. He struggled for its immediate experience, direct vision, or in the language of Swami Vivekananda, realisation. He proclaimed the universal possibility of such direct realisation. The highest truths must be such as to be amenable to the highest and most intimate mode of experience. Religion in essence, must be more immediate and integral than sense-experience and less uncertain, conjectural and speculative than logical demonstration. This factuality of Religion is a cardinal point with Sri Ramakrishna. This has great concordance with the Upanishadic emphasis of *Darśana*—(*Draṣṭavya*), with the declaration of the Gita that the ultimate reality is *prayakṣāvagamam* and is of a nature to satisfy the scientific temper of our times which demands factual verification. Faith may be valuable, dogmas

may serve provisional purposes, scriptures may lead the way, but the ultimate deliverance of religion must be experiential.

To Sri Ramakrishna the religious truth was an unshakable, stubborn and irreducible datum. It was providential that swami Vivekananda put the right question to him and drew forth from him the declaration of its experiential and factual character. The gods of popular religion may be *parokṣyapriyā hi devatāḥ*, but the supreme reality of religion must be *Sākṣād oparokṣād brahma*. This is a kind of radicalism in spiritual matters, and if Sri Ramakrishna stands for anything unique in modern times, it is for this principle of the factuality of religion. There is no true or first-rate spirituality unless there is this realisational certainty. In fact the direct evidence is so overwhelming for Sri Ramakrishna that the facts of mundane experience climb down to the level of shadows. Here we have *Satyasya satyam*.

### C

There is something special in Sri Ramakrishna's teaching concerning the pathway to the realisation of the immediacy of the God-head. He denounces none of the conventional programmes. He does accept the Vedantic discipline of discrimination. But that is not enough by itself for him. The conventional life of karma and rites is good, but it does not go the whole way. He accepts Tantra, but does not stop with it. The formal worship inculcated in the Bhakti cults is fine, but something more is required to bring about the consummation. The yogic technique is fruitful, but is not without its dangers and is not quite indispensable. It is necessary to discern clearly Sri Ramakrishna's prescription here. He exemplified in his life and promulgated in his precepts what was almost the core of his Sadhana. He set forth what may be called the Vyākula Yoga. It is intense yearning, ceaseless and passionate quest, for God, in all one's life, through all the faculties and resources of personality. This Vyākula Yoga is simple and at the same time all-absorbing. It was the deliberate and repeated teaching of Sri Ramakrishna, that love carried

to the point of self-effacing intensity, almost agony of desire, brings to the aspirant the fruition of his search. All other ways are to contribute to this and this is the supreme method of endeavour for God. He frequently quotes the lines of Rama prasad.

“Cry to your Mother Syama with a real cry, O mind !  
And how can she hold herself from you ?  
How can Syama stay away ? ...”

It is significant that he preferred to look upon the Divine as the Mother and thought of himself as the child given to this real insistent cry for the Mother. One has not got to wait for long to reach the goal if one has reached this point of longing. This is in fact the dawn of realisation. Sri Ramakrishna reaffirms the assurance of the Gita,

*Nivasiṣyasi mayyeva ata ūrdhvam  
na smṛayaḥ.*

## D

Sri Ramakrishna is most helpful to us when he characterises this experience. The Godless life is one of illusion, it is due to our lack of desire for God. It is an illusion of absence, a ‘negative hallucination’, generated by our wish that there be no God. That truly is a case of wish-fulfilment.

The experience or realisation is the Supreme Truth. The unfailing mark of truth is integrative power and that power is the central character of this experience. In the realisation not merely is the individual assimilated to the object of his devotion, the whole universe is transmuted into a glorious manifestation of the Absolute. *Tatrā ko mohaḥ kaśśokaḥ ekatwamanuṣāsyataḥ.* Sri Ramakrishna calls the experience not merely jñāna, the discernment of the transcendent, but also vijñāna, a higher phase, for it holds the transcendent as of the form of the manifold universe. The vision overflows into the daily life of man and substitutes all-embracing Daya for Maya. It is in this direction of Daya that the Master trained his beloved disciple Narendra, into Vivekananda.

It is in this integrative process that Sri Ramakrishna witnesses, as it were, the fundamental unification of all religions. He is the first to proclaim in unmistakable terms the equal authenticity of all faiths in terms of the experience of God. This pertains not merely to Indian religions, not merely to the cults of God with attributes and God without attributes, the Dvaita and Advaita of popular Hinduism, but also to all the religions of the world, past, present and future. For him this unification of faiths was not a matter of social adjustment, but a vital spiritual necessity. This working out of the integrative function of religious experience to its logical culmination, is one of the characteristic gifts of Sri Ramakrishna. The unification of man and God, the unification of the transcendent and the immanent, the unification of the vision of God with devoted service to mankind, and the unification of religions are the striking features of the integrative experience as witnessed in Sri Ramakrishna.

In conclusion we may sum up the great significance of Sri Ramakrishna. He awakened our consciousness to the supreme concern of life. He emphasised the experiential or realisational quality of religion. He distinguished the ardent and all-consuming craving for God as the central factor in Sadhana. He worked out the integrative consequences of spiritual life to the farthest bounds.

Let us, in all humility and devotion, pray for his benediction and seek his guidance in our onward march.

## *The Divine Preceptor*

When the Prophet Mohammad was asked by a disciple of his as to what criterion one should apply to identify a Saint, he is reported to have replied that a true Saint is one who communicates the presence of God in his life and personality. He who is an opaque medium, as it were, and raises himself into importance hiding God is a pseudo-saint. This is a magnificent test for applying to Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna, it is recorded, never mentioned himself as 'I'. He would refer to himself as 'this place', rather an impersonal manner of indicating oneself. His whole life from the earliest phase of his recorded infancy to the final passing away was a continuous stream of God-consciousness. He knew nothing else, spoke of nothing else and had a passion for nothing else. He would go to great distances to speak to people with whom he could talk of God. When Kesheb Chandra Sen passed away, his principal grief was that he lost a man in Calcutta with whom he could freely talk of God. It was impossible for him to hide God by his own personality. In one of his repeated metaphors, he called himself a mere pillow-case filled with the Divine Mother. In his last illness, when some sorrowing devotee appealed to him to pray to the Divine Mother to cure him, he said that his whole mind and heart were given away to the Divine Mother and he could not pull them out to fix them on his body, as was necessary for the suggested prayer. When a devotee explained that though he could enter Nirvana in Nirvikalpa Samadhi he was keeping up his personality out of compassion to the disciples, he sharply corrected him saying that it was not he that was doing so but the Mother Herself. In his entire life he never lapsed into self-affirmation that could efface the awareness of God. He, thus, fully satisfies the criterion of Saintliness. It is remarkable that Mahatma Gandhi picks out this particular truth in his tribute to the Paramahansa. He says "His life enables us to see God face to face."

There was no doubt in the mind of his close devotees that he was an Avatar. The Bhairavi Brahmani established it in an assembly of the learned by reference to sacred books. He himself revealed the truth to Swami Vivekananda in a crucial last scene. The most sceptical of his associates was to describe him as the Avatara-Varishtha. Well; what exactly is the function of an Avatar? It is said that an Avatar protects the good, annihilates the unrighteous and establishes Dharma. It is necessary to go into this idea of protecting a devotee. It is protection in relation to the devotee's aspiration. If the devotee is cast into the gloom of doubt and he is hankering for certitude, God protects and saves him by life-giving self-revelation. It is the revelation in moments of crisis in faith that is true protection. Establishing Dharma just means this authentication of Dharma by the manifestation of the Divine. In Sri Ramakrishna this function of protection is fulfilled strikingly. All the seekers of God, whose faith was shaking for want of a sustaining assurance, had vitalizing revelations in him. It is recorded how an old sadhaka of his village had his longings fulfilled, and saluted the boy Ramakrishna and wept for joy. His one sorrow was that he could not live to witness the later glories of the Avatar. The case of Gopal's mother is even more striking. She was a devotee of Gopala and she was blessed with the vision of Gopala in Sri Ramakrishna. She felt it was too good to be true, and she was assured of the truth of the vision by Swami Vivekananda in tears. To his intimate disciples Sri Ramakrishna brought redemption from doubt, and rejuvenated spiritual faith. He not merely awakened perpetually the consciousness of God, but also revealed in his own personality the Supreme Reality that the seekers were hankering after.

It is necessary to understand the relation of Sri Ramakrishna to his Gurus. All the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna are clear on one point. They all record that the Divine Mother revealed Herself to him, when his importunity for the vision had reached the suicidal extreme. This was long before he met his first Guru. It was considerably later that his second Guru came to

him. This point of chronology must be appreciated. The Bhairavi Brahmani came to him, commissioned as it were by the Mother and put him into the regular Tantric, and Bhakti Sadhanas. His God-realization actually preceded this discipline under the first Guru. Then what could be the significance of this Sadhana? Virtually it meant God-realization in new ways and also, this is important, the vindication of the efficacy of those traditional Sadhanas. The same thing repeated itself in the case of the Sadhana under Totapuri. It brought him non-dualistic realization, but his former realization of the Divine Mother did also contain the impersonal and non-dualistic realization. In this instance also the experience of Sri Ramakrishna was a re-vindication of Advaita. In both cases it turned out that Sri Ramakrishna, well-established already in the reality of the Mother, established the validity of these different techniques of God-realization. It was surely a case of “*Sacchāstrī Kurvanti sāvitrāni* (They validate scriptures.)” The Bhairavi served another important purpose in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. She established the identity of Sri Ramakrishna as an Avatar, and the greatest pundits of the region acknowledged the identity. It looks as if instead of her showing God to Sri Ramakrishna, she found in him the God she was seeking in concrete flesh and blood and her own Sadhana reached its consummation. In many other minor ways also this was a transforming association for her and when she left the disciple she was in a higher state of spirituality than what she had brought with her when she came. Totapuri's Advaita underwent a mighty transformation through his disciple. In fact the Advaita Sadhana was sanctioned by the Divine Mother. It became, as it were, a part, a phase of Sri Ramakrishna's devotion to the Mother. When Totapuri left Sri Ramakrishna, he had *ascended* to the acceptance of Kali, the Divine Mother. Thus Sri Ramakrishna gave more than he received, in respect of his two Gurus. His Sadhana in the two disciplines was not for proving the reality of the Divine Mother, but rather for proving the validity of the disciplines. The story extends itself. He practised Christian discipline and Sufi discipline and attained a realization that put the two on the firm pedestal of absolute authenticity.

There is a certain uniqueness in the message of Sri Ramakrishna. He was an alien to no spiritual tradition, and the sincere followers of every cult, religion, sect and philosophy find in him a teacher and friendly guide of their own persuasion. It is impossible while reading *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* not to see him as one's own, as having come to confirm and perfect one's own standpoint. Almost every major spiritual tendency gets enthusiastic support from him. Brahman is undoubtedly formless, but also with form. The Jagannath of Puri showed Himself as such to a devotee whom Sri Ramakrishna cites. Hanuman is credited by Ramakrishna as having reconciled Dvaita, Visishtadvaita and Advaita. The world is unreal from the standpoint of Jnana, and from the higher standpoint of Vijnana it is re-affirmed as what Brahman itself has become. Nitya is real and Lila too is real. Sri Ramakrishna rejects nothing in the world's history of religion except fragmentation of truth and fanaticism. He imparts insight to our understanding of every religion. I have been asked several times how it is possible for me to take interest in all the dialectically opposed schools of Vedanta. I have said in reply that to a servant of the servants of Sri Ramakrishna this seeming impossibility is a definite possibility. The miracle of the reconciliation of the world's religions and religious philosophies is a triumphant achievement of Sri Ramakrishna.

It is interesting to note the kinds of people that came to Sri Ramakrishna and the several confirmations and corrections he added to their specialities.

He had a profound sympathy for the social reformers and humanitarian workers. In fact he himself set an example in social reform by insisting on taking Bhiksha from Dhani, not a Brahmin, after his Upanayanam, the Brahminical initiation ceremony. He loved and admired Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar for his reformist and humanitarian activity. He only wished that the great Vidyasagar had seen Divinity rather than mere humanity in the fellow human beings. During his historic pilgrimage to Banaras, he insisted on his devoted patron Mathura Babu's feeding and clothing of the poor and destitute

on the way at Deogarh. He refused to proceed to Banaras unless this was done. He affirmed as a part of his doctrine of Iswara-Kotis that they survive Nirvikalpa Samadhi in order to do good to humanity. He sharply reprimanded even the great Vivekananda for hankering after personal salvation when the higher goal of working for the uplift of fellow-creatures was calling him. It is this seeker of Samadhi, Vivekananda, that was to thunder forth later, "As long as there is a single dog starving in my country, the whole of my religion will lie in finding food for it." But Sri Ramakrishna insisted that social work must be based on Daya and not on Maya. There is a definite danger of its being an aspect of Maya, if life is seen in a materialistic way. Social work founded on Maya becomes one of the social curses which the future humanitarian has to strive to eradicate. Social work must become a part of God-consciousness in order to be true. How well is this principle illustrated in the life of Swami Vivekananda and the career of the Mahatma!

Sri Ramakrishna was closely associated with a number of ardent preachers of religion of both the orthodox faith and the protestant movements such as Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj. He was sympathetic to the zeal for spreading truth, but he was critical also. He used the parable of Padmalochan blowing the conch in the temple calling the worshippers, without installing the deity in the holy of holies, to emphasise that one must establish God within oneself before one could practise oratory in the cause of God. It is necessary that one must receive a commission from God, an Adesa as he termed it, to do so. There is no need whatsoever for unillumined and unauthorised teachers. God who has created the world, Sri Ramakrishna would say, would take care of the sincere seekers Himself if He finds them victims of error. He will rectify them in his own inscrutable and omnipotent manner and set things right. The preacher of God must at least concede that God takes vigilant care of His creatures. Religion, when sincere, is a self-rectifying process and the whole process is in the safe hands of God.

The conventional man of Religion found in Sri Ramakrishna a strengthening and vitalizing force. The Paramahansa was incredibly and incurably addicted to image-worship, the most criticised aspect of popular Hinduism. He realised his highest realization as a priest of Mother Kali. He vitalized conventional religion by a process of internal criticism. The conventional creeds and cults are given to narrowness and fanaticism. Sri Ramakrishna was a deep admirer of the Bhagavatam. But he detected in it too, certain unbecoming sectarian features. Luckily they were interpolations. Even the deeply moving songs addressed to Mother Kali were subjected to evaluation. He severely excluded the singing of some of them. We know what raptures of experience they sent him into, and therefore this critical selection by him is significant. He was a traditionalist with a vision and with the rational and universalizing spirit intact. Even as the great Suka is said to have made Vedanta sweeter by his edition of it, Sri Ramakrishna elevated and purified the inherited conventional religion of the country. His life added 'sweetness and light' to it.

Sri Ramakrishna made some definite pronouncements on the subject of Yoga. He disparaged legitimately the body-centred practice of Yoga. He pooh-poohed openly the practice of Yoga for acquisition of psychic powers. It was, for him, the making use of superior means for inferior ends. He even argued that the best physiological and psychological results of Yoga are obtainable through Sankirtan. But instead of making Yoga a special and esoteric technique, a mystery-mongering affair, he advised even his householder disciples to take to periodic solitude and meditation. Yoga thus became a universal element of devotional life and shed its potentiality for dangerous aberrations.

It must be remembered that the greatest power of Sri Ramakrishna was exercised in his handling of the rationalists. He placed highest the disciples who were hyper-critical and were sceptical of even his purity of life and his visions of God. Hence the pre-eminence he gave to his beloved Narendran. Even as those who go to a cattle-fair pick up the ones that show some

mettle in them—and this is his own analogy—the seekers with the spirit of inquiry and no intellectual softness were his chosen ones. To them Sri Ramakrishna's supreme recommendation was that they should seek God with a passionate longing. The fact of the situation, according to him, was that we do not perceive the Divine presence because we do not want to perceive it. It is a simple case of 'negative hallucination', of failing to see because we do not want the fact to be that. It is decisively demonstrable that Atheism is a case of wish-fulfilment. If only man were to seek God at least as passionately as he clings to mundane values—though God is infinitely worthier of search—Sri Ramakrishna assures and demonstrates that He is more real than all else. In fact He reveals Himself as the only Reality, "Ekameva Advitiam", as the fact of facts, "Satyasya Satyam". This perhaps is the boldest teaching of Sri Ramakrishna that the reality of God is concealed from us by our own failure to have an inclination in that direction. One has only to open one's heart in earnest desire, the revelation takes place irresistibly and in its all-devouring immensity. The honest inquirer must search his heart and grow in it the truth-finding faculty of love.

To the Sadhakas, those who devoutly hungered for God, Sri Ramakrishna became everything. He accepted their 'power of attorney' and took their lives in his hands completely. Girish Chandra Ghosh was not the only devotee whose life he took into his hands entirely. All devotees of the inner circle belonged to this category. They received his sovereign and unfailing care. They were so lost in God that any initiative, any capacity for self-reliance, was impossible for them. God-intoxicated devotees are helpless in the matter of working out their salvation and in such a circumstance the responsibility becomes entirely God's. The devotees of the inner circle were such, and their souls were seized by Sri Ramakrishna who shaped them with absolute mastery towards the highest consummation. This is Sri Ramakrishna's glorious illustration and interpretation of the great passage of the Gita, 'God rescues the infirm, if this infirmity is a result of devotion.' Infirmity for any other reason is

of no avail, and devotion which is not taken to this high pitch of incapacitating the devotee for self-help is also not of much merit. Infirmary owing to excessive absorption in God, and devotion intense enough to bring it about, are the pre-conditions for God taking the devotee into His absolute possession. In such a situation God is truly the mother and the devotee is the kitten. The word descriptive of this aspect of the Divine is the motherhood of God. It may be even said that God as mother is the final point in Sri Ramakrishna's mystic theology

May He take us to that state wherein He will accomplish our blessedness solely by His grace !

*Brahma satyaṁ jaganmātā tat siddhiḥ paramaṁ padam.*

# *Categorising Swami Vivekananda*

## I

It is a privilege to be called upon to contemplate the greatness of Swami Vivekananda and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity graciously accorded to me by Swami Adidevananda. I am to dwell on my theme with a full admission of my inadequacies. Swami Vivekananda outruns and bounds beyond our categories of appreciation and perhaps the indication of this fact can itself constitute an humble and honest homage.

Before attempting that, I think it proper to address myself to the correction of an error of unspoken sentiment that lurks in some quarters. It is often suggested that the personality or the message of the great Swami is an outmoded affair and we have progressed beyond the level of thinking to which he was of value. In other words, it is supposed that he is a spent force. We have to take note of this estimate because we often suffer for not being sufficiently hard on stupidity. I wonder whether the evils in India that he cried against have disappeared. The degradation of national character that pained him to the utmost, has not passed away and is, one is compelled to recognize, being perpetuated in aggravated shapes. The lethargy, pettiness and weaknesses unworthy of our great past and the greater future we all dream of, are there in fuller measure to-day than in his time. Unfortunately, we have not yet made the burning exhortations of the Swamiji to the Indian Nation no longer necessary. Further, Swami Vivekananda carried a message of spirituality, of eternal wisdom and that is something that cannot pass away. If he spoke out words of utilitarian calculation and secular expedients, they would have been surely out of date before they were fully articulated. Like the teacher of the Gita, he attacked a temporal problem in terms of timeless varities. In the nature of things, he represents what cannot

pass away, and what constitutes the foundation of an order that has an immortal destiny. Surely, our shrinking away from the eternal does not extinguish it. Rather, we are rushing towards the extinction of historical oblivion and inconsequence.

## II

I intend to demonstrate how our categories and classifications of personalities have to be stretched almost to the breaking point when we attempt to size up the Great Swami.

(a) Swami Vivekananda comes before our historical vision initially as a man of religion. This is a characterisation that he would like and accords well with the fact that his eminence was inaugurated by a Parliament of Religions. He engaged himself all his life with the stupendous phenomenon of religion. He formulated an illuminating and comprehensive definition of religion as the 'struggle to transcend the senses' and distinguished the several components of religion, ritual, mythology and philosophy. On these elements he made his explanatory, critical and commendatory comments. He had an incisive insight into the evolution of the religious consciousness and marked the direction of that evolution. The core of his contribution to religion is his demarcation between conventional religion consisting of conformity to practices and beliefs and the dynamic and aspiring spirit of quest for realization. He emphasised with repeated and immense force that the essence of religion lies in personal inward realization of the Divine. Anything less than that is for him, a species of atheism. So he is a man of religion with a difference, a tremendous difference, that lifts him far above denominational and conservative religiosity.

(b) Swami Vivekananda descended on the Parliament of Religions in Chicago as an exponent of Hinduism. The American newspapers labelled him as the 'Hindu Monk of India'. It is a just description, though the word 'Hindu' is a historical absurdity. The Swami himself would have preferred a different name for the faith he represented. He would have liked words

‘Aryan Religion’ or ‘Vedic Religion’ or best of all ‘Vedantism’. But the untenable title sticks.

He was undoubtedly a mighty Hindu and rejoiced over his Hindu heritage. No one worshipped Hinduism with a more passionate adoration, no one grasped it with a more penetrating perceptiveness and no one propagated it with a more brilliant presentation. Everything in Hinduism, its rituals, its stories, its social ethics and its many-sided metaphysics, its Yogas, were accepted by him with glowing appreciation. What is distinctive in Hinduism, its origin independent of a historical founder, its doctrine of Karma, its theory of incarnations and even its idol-worship, received from him authentic and warm glorification. He literally did the miracle of Kāya-Kalpa to Hinduism and rejuvenated it with added splendours. But Swami Vivekananda was nothing if not Viveka embodied. He was not blind to the encrustation of ages, the unwieldy mass of weakening customs and superstitions and more than all its social inadequacies. He had an explanation and historically speaking, a valid explanation. He maintained that there is an abiding core of Hinduism as enunciated in the primordial Vedas and more particularly the lofty Upanishads and the Gita and there are transient and fluctuating codes of laws promulgated by the Smritis in age after age. The latter have no unshakable and lasting authority. They serve their local and contemporary purpose and are superseded in the next epoch according to design. Thus Hinduism does provide for a continuous process of change in its second order ordinances, while the fountain-head inspiration of the first order remains immutable and eternal. Therefore, there is room for changing the external fabric of Hinduism according to the needs of the times, while the central substance is to be preserved in its purity. There is thus an inbuilt mechanism in Hinduism for dynamic progress and evolution. If this is not operated, the religion of the Rishis is not to blame.

There is a distinctive feature in Hinduism which Swami Vivekananda was destined to bring out in blazing clarity. Following his great master Sri Ramakrishna and the great sages

of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita, he proclaimed that all religions are true. The apparent variations among them pertain to non-essentials and in their foundational inspiration they speak out the same message. The variety serves different ages, different stages of spiritual evolution and different temperaments. There is a natural necessity for such variation. But the goal of all religions is one and universal. There is a single thread running through the many beads. This declaration of the universal validity of all religions is a distinctive trait of Hinduism. There is no place for exclusiveness, fanaticism and bigotry. 'The uniqueness of Hinduism is its universality.' This great Mantra, we owe to Swami Vivekananda. He reiterated this discovery in all his utterances with matchless force and overwhelming substantiation. He assimilated all the religions of the world into the body of Hinduism. He combined in himself the zeal of the Hebrew prophets and the wide vision of the sages of the Upanishads and brought forth, as it were, a Universal Religion. Hinduism surpasses its own traditional structure in his super-historical perspective.

(c) Swami Vivekananda rightly discerned Vedanta as the soul of Hinduism. He loved to designate himself as a Vedantin. It is a fascinating task to outline the 'Map of Vedanta' as he conceived it. It remains for us to see whether this characterization of the Swami as a Vedantin brings out all the wealth of his personality. Vedanta is principally a philosophy of inquiry. It does not stand on any dogma or uncritically posited proposition. The first Sutra of Badarayana makes clear this feature of Vedanta. It is a 'Jignasa'. Swami Vivekananda loved to dwell on the fact that the Upanishads are the only scriptures in the world that say that mere devotion to them is not the road to salvation.

*nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ na bahunā Śrutena.*

He lays down the principle that reason must not be contradicted in Vedanta. Reason is the principal pathway of philosophy. Vedanta is philosophy par excellence. The function of reason is to see unity in diversity. Unity is the

goal of human reason. As such Vedanta must harmonize all the inspired declarations of the Upanishads and also all Schools of Vedanta, such as Dvaita Visistadvaita and Advaita. He affirmed that Vedanta accomplishes this unification of vision. He proclaims that one of the lessons that he learnt at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, was the possibility, nay, the necessity of such a synthesis in the many-splendoured mansion of Vedanta itself. The task of Vedanta proceeds further.

It harmonizes all the religions of the world by elucidating the common fundamentals of all religions. It furnishes the basic framework for inter-religious fellowship. It goes further. Almost all religions contain directions or path-ways to the realization of the Divine destiny of life. Swami Vivekananda maintained that Vedanta organizes these pathways into the four Yogas, Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Raja-Yoga. He formulates the principles of these four approaches to the Divine in his classic treatment of these Yogas in all their depths and magnitudes. Consistently with the spirit of Vedanta and the Gita he exhibits their final convergence. The organic unity of religions is no mere pious wish but a matter of demonstrated fact. The synthetic genius of Vedanta extends even further in the hands of Swami Vivekananda. He perceives a basic affinity between modern science and Vedanta. Both seek a final unity of explanation. A radical dualism of man and nature, of God and the world, or of even matter and energy is intolerable to both. While some of the scientific philosophers of his generation stopped with a materialistic monism, Swami Vivekananda saw no reason for not advancing to the complete monism of the absolute spirit. While matter is an impalpable creature of hypothesis, spirit or Atman is an ever-luminous and immediate certainty. The theory of evolution was a sensation in his age. Swami Vivekananda admitted it coolly and showed how the theory was there in a metaphysically purer form in the philosophy of Sankhya and Yoga. He argued that evolution has to be supplemented with involution in order to furnish a complete account of the cosmic process. In this he anticipated brilliantly the psychology of Jung and the evolutionism of

Bergson and Aurobindo. It was his bold thesis, repeated often, that Vedanta constitutes the only religion for the age of reason and scientific enlightenment. It is not understood sufficiently that the Swami had a firm grasp of the history of Western culture and the fundamental philosophers of Europe. He knew Plato thoroughly and his theory of education and the doctrine that all knowledge is just a process of drawing out what is there already in the soul of man as potentiality are a fusion of Vedanta and Platonism. He accepted the monism of Hegel and Schopenhauer in general but subjected them to severe criticism also. Hegel's exaltation of the cosmos and Schopenhauer's exaltation of will into metaphysical eminence drew from him sharp and just criticism. In other words, Vedanta comes to terms with the deeper representatives of Western thought neither with servile adoption nor with indiscriminate hostility. There is amazing maturity in his adjudgement of Western philosophy. If all this is the achievement of synthesis on the part of Vedanta in the hands of Swami Vivekananda, we have to watch him going beyond even this level. The scientific conception of the world that flourished at the time of Swami Vivekananda enjoyed a state of complacency. It believed that it had mastered the secret of nature in terms of time, space and mechanistic causation conceived as absolute and all-explanatory. This sense of security was to break down eventually in the realm of science itself. The great German Philosopher, Kant, had worked out a theory of knowledge which declared the world of science to be essentially phenomenal and not ultimate, Swami Vivekananda shared this conviction, but attributed the credit for this discovery to Sankara. He advanced in terms of Vedanta his famous concept of Maya. In this he anticipated in fundamentals later doctrines of science itself. That time and space are not absolute realities and that causation does not characterize ultimate reality are parts of Swami Vivekananda's notion of Maya. It also contains the implication that the observer of nature is creatively involved in the constitution of nature. Nature may appear a self-complete and intelligible order to superficial understanding, but deeper investigation reveals it to

be 'a mystic twilight of existence and non-existence'. There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of all so-called existence whether subjective or objective. Modern physics may not have arrived at the complete notion of Maya but it fulfils many of the leading prophecies of Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta. It does contain a principle of indeterminacy. Maya is no hypothesis or theory but a simple factual rendering of our entire mundane experience. It is a description and not an explanatory category.

The category of Maya damages all empirical thought, be it common sense or science or even metaphysics founded on the findings of science. Reality-in-itself was a dark mystery to Kant but not so to Swami Vivekananda. The Atman or the observer of nature in his fundamental being is the noumenal reality and 'Aham Brahmasmi' is a fact of facts. This position is the quittance of Advaita Vedanta for which the universal and infinite Atman or Brahman is the sole reality and all else, matter, change and diversity are phenomenal appearances. This reality is not knowable, for knowledge implying the dualism of the knower and the known is a degeneration and not unknown for it constitutes the self-evident core of the knowing self itself. But what is knowable and unknowable falls short of the supreme principle. We have here neither blind realism nor empty agnosticism. With this consummation, Vedanta conceived as a process of intellection attempting to capture objective reality breaks down. Knowing expires, as it were, in being. The entire mechanism of inquiry, thought and knowledge is transcended and the seeker is literally lost in the ineffable and supra-rational ecstasy of being the sought.

'After long searches here and there, in temples and churches in earths and heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries, shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own self, the reality of your life, body and soul.' (Jnana-Yoga—38).

(d) The world that we face in our mundane experience is Maya. This fact does not imply for Swami Vivekananda that it merits total dismissal. On the contrary, the world that we misconstrued as undivine and standing by itself must be 'deified' and must be looked upon as divinity manifest. All indeed is Brahman. This notion of 'Cosmic Deification' is a perennially inspiring source of active endeavour in life. This new aspect of the principle of Maya was uniquely emphasised by the Swami. Man as such is divine, and his inherent divinity makes him march irresistibly towards freedom. 'Divinity is freedom'. All that lives is the incarnation of the universal spirit, one with the substance of our being. Hence the solidarity of life follows as an inevitable consequence. Thus the dignity of man, evolution towards freedom and the solidarity of life spring from the Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda. He was no monk and recluse who sought an escapist salvation. He no doubt affirmed renunciation and self-abnegation, but they were integrated to the ideal of service, the larger ideal of universal emancipation. He threw himself mercilessly into his plans of campaign, and sought to realize his universal Atman on the canvas of humanity. Even his patriotism sprang from this Vedanta. It was no petty secular sentiment, but a deep-rooted spiritual passion.

Democracy, socialism, and humanism, nay, ethics, itself have no basis and justification apart from this principle of cosmic deification. The social work that he preached with such energy was an extension, a legitimate extension, of his vision of the Atman. The old Vedanta had erred grievously in neglecting the masses. The modern humanitarian movements err equally badly in overlooking the spiritual foundations of humanism. Both spirituality and humanism breakdown their traditional barriers in the hands of the Swamiji.

Social service as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda does not stop with the establishment of general material well-being or diffusion of intellectual enlightenment. It aims at liberating the strength of man born of his intrinsic divinity so that he may creatively shape his own divine destiny. The dire sin of weakness has to be eradicated. Man as the divine spirit has to be

awakened to self-consciousness. Towards that consummation Swami Vivekananda laboured in his Practical Vedanta. That was the burden of his thundering orations from Colombo to Almora. May it be given to us to respond to his mighty voice.

## ERRATA

### *Printed*

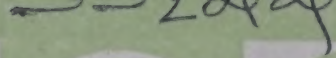
Prana, chaitnya, jnanna,  
samvid and jnappti-to be

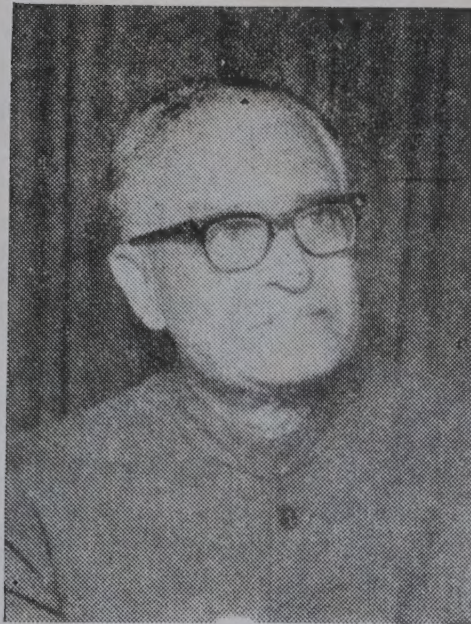
### *Corrected into*

Prajna, chaitanya, jnāna,  
Samvit, Jnapti









Singra Iyengar Srinivasa Raghavachar hails from a family of scholars belonging to Melkote, the famous Pilgrim Centre. He had his early education in the Sanskrit Pathasala in Melkote which laid a firm foundation for his future pursuit of Philosophic studies. In 1934 he obtained the second rank in the Intermediate examination for the whole state. Then he joined the B.A. Honours course in Maharaja's College and majored in Social Philosophy. In 1938 he obtained his Master's Degree in Philosophy. In both the examinations he secured first class and first rank and won two gold medals. He started his career as a lecturer in the department of Philosophy, Maharaja's College, Mysore. And later he became Prof. and Head of the department of Philosophy of the University of Mysore. As a well known scholar he has many articles and books to his credit. Prof. Raghavachar is a distinguished scholar of Philosophy. Perhaps he is the only scholar who has obtained three golden Jubilee awards of the University of Mysore.

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*By the same author :*

Naishkarmya Siddhi

Contact : Director, Prasaraṅga, Mysore 570 006

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